Libel jury stumps Botham and Lamb

Matthew Engel

THE cricketing celebrity Ian Botham is facing, if not quite ruin, then at least a severe blow to his lifestyle after losing his marathon libel case against the former Pakistan captain Imran Khan.

After 13 days in Court 13 at the High Court, the jury last week decided by a majority verdict against claims by Botham and his former England team-mate Allan Lamb that they had been called racist and lacking class by Imran in the magazine India Today. They also rejected by a majority Botham's charge that Imran had, by implication, called him a cheat in a British newspaper article.

Halfway through the trial Imran agreed that Botham did not cheat at cricket, and he will have to pay for that part of the case. However, after an exercise estimated to have cost £750,000, Botham and Lamb will have to bear the brunt.

Botham said he was "astonished" by the verdict, a view shared by many observers. Speculation during the jury's 4½-hour deliberation centred only on the damages award. The judge, Mr Justice French, gave the jurors — seven men, five women — a notably curt thank you and then left, without a word of apology for obliging them to spend three weeks of high summer cooped up listening to an argument that was at best abstruse and at times absurd.

It was the second sudden defeat for English cricketers inside three days: England lost nine wickets to Pakistan's bowlers in the Lord's Test while George Carman QC was making his final speech on Imran's behalf. The implications for cricket are uncertain, though Pakistani players may now have enhanced respect for English decision-making, and it may help ensure that the rest of this summer's Test series is harmonious. It is good news for Imran's presumed career in Pakistani politics.



Imran Khan and his wife, Jemima, leaving the High Court last week PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

But the verdict has sent out a clear warning to potential ligitants that the libel casino, once presumed to be a certain source of ready cash, is now only about as safe as Lloyd's of London.

Imran gave thanks to the Almighty, rather than to Mr Carman, when he left with his pregnant wife, Sir James Goldsmith's daughter Jemima. Botham and Lamb, observing the best cricketing traditions, accepted the umpire's decision with as much grace as they could manage and Botham said he would just have to go back to his roadshow to raise the cash. He will probably also have to spend more Christmases doing panto in provincial theatres.

More than a dozen England cricketers trooped through the courtroom giving evidence. The most astonishing performance came when Geoffrey Boycott, subpoenaed by Imran, appeared wearing no jacket and carrying a boot whose significance the judge never allowed him to explain.

The alleged libels were published in 1994, and in the hours before the case opened there were intense efforts by Imran's lawyers to reach a settlement. These foundered because the proffered apology was considered too grudging and because Botham and Lamb wanted damages — even though a third party had offered to pay both sides' costs up to that point.

As the case went on, and developed into a bonfire of fivers — about one every 20 seconds, according to the best guesses — there was a growing sense of the absurd.

Imran's attempts to prove Botham had cheated by picking the seam or gouging a cricket ball failed utterly when his videos from 14-year-old Test matches purporting to prove this were adopted by Botham's own counsel, Charles Gray QC, and clearly showed him manipulating, quite legally, a ball that had gone out of shape.

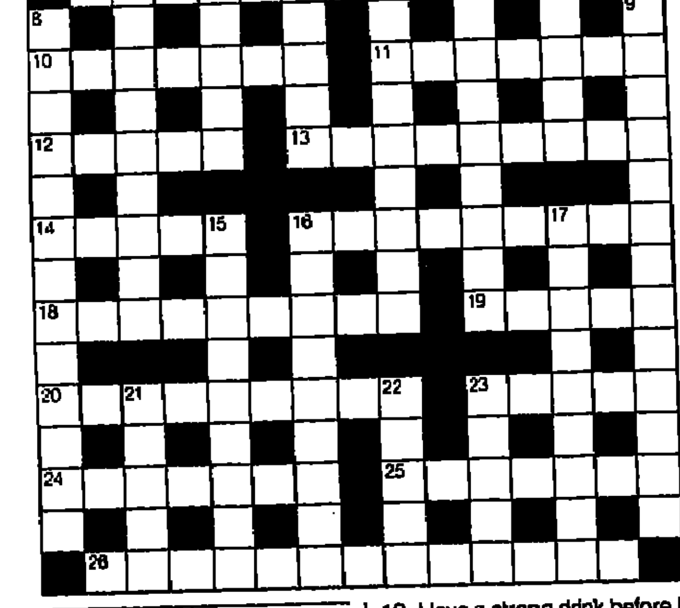
The argument then largely went into semantics about the distinction between cheating and merely breaking the rules. There was no consensus among the cricketers about whether ball-tampering had ever been accepted as custom and practice within the game.

Imran made no attempt to defend the suggestions that Botham and Lamb were racist or lacked class, and claimed that he had been misquoted.

In the absence of substantive disagreement between the parties, the jury may well have taken the view that the case should never have come to court.

Possibly they decided to punish the plaintiffs, as the presumed perpetrators of their incarceration. The legal system is such that we shall never know without breaking the rules, or perhaps cheating.

Cryptic crossword by Chifonie



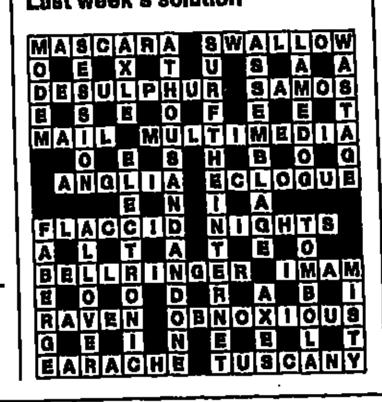
Across

1 Keep quiet! To talk rubbish is out of order (6, 2, 5)
10 Become aware that lies are risky (7)
11 A passion for European travel (7)
12 A girl is caught in wire netting (5)
13 Lib. defies whip! That shows scepticism (9)
14 Acknowledge juvenile's not Conservative (5)
16 Lord eats a consomme that's far from clear! (9)
18 Enclosed area stocked with drink is a challenge to those in the pub (4, 2, 3)
19 Have a strong drink before hard trek (5)
20 Greek goddess gets washed. That's hard and dangerous! (9)
23 Direct attention to umpire's hesitation (5)
24 Hermit's ulcer's troublesome. Ambulance finally is here (7)
25 Ergo, a country in Africa's a country in Africa (7)
26 Small book stolen by one into corruption (6,7)

Down

2 Agent loses head and hugs celebrity artist (9)
3 Detachment and ensign initially get together (5)
4 Make a change and put me in last (5)
5 Exaggerate the number of deliveries to the gallery (9)
6 Writer got up earlier in the afternoon to produce literary work (5, 4)
7 Artificial intelligence bears out politician was elsewhere at the time (5)
8 Regular's career is a stock type (8, 5)
9 Often hear door forced to get another drink (3, 3, 3, 4)
15 Make the little beast bowl and throw (9)
16 Exercise is about to stiffen soldiers' disposition (9)
17 A briefcase is left with a page (9)
21 Toulouse-Lautrec took part in producing what's right (5)
22 Pried into agreement in Kent (5)
23 Authorisation to wind up the clock (5)

Last week's solution



MASCARA SWALLOW
O E X T U S A A
DESULPHUR SAMOS
E S E O F E E T
MAIL MULTIMEDIA
O E S H B O G
ANGLIA ECLOGUE
E N I A
FLACCID NIGHTS
A L T A T E O
BELLRINGER IMAM
E O O D R A B I
RAVEN OBNOXIOUS
G E I N E E L T
EARACHE TUSCANY

Golf Volvo Scandinavian Masters

Westwood, a Masters blaster

Michael Britten in Gothenburg

LEE WESTWOOD capped three months of enviable consistency on Sunday by seizing his first European Tour victory at the Forsgarden Club. The 23-year-old became the Volvo Scandinavian Masters champion when he holed a putt from 40 feet at the second extra hole.

He defeated Russell Claydon and Paul Broadhurst in the sudden-death play-off after all three English golfers had shot final rounds of 68 to tie on 281, seven under par and one stroke ahead of the Spaniard Santiago Luna.

Broadhurst was the first to succumb when the trio returned to the 449-yard 18th. After driving into a bunker and missing from eight feet he could not match his rivals' scrambled pars. It was his fourth successive play-off failure.

On the second visit Westwood again missed the green but sank the most important putt of his fledgling career from the front edge for a birdie three. Claydon missed his putt from 25 feet.

Westwood included Colin Montgomerie, Ian Woosnam, Bernhard Langer and John Daly among his victims; the American "surrendering" with a typically flamboyant gesture by throwing his titanium driver into a pond in front of the 7th green after taking a seven.

Daly and the other three luminaries had rounds of 70. Montgomerie, who finished 12th, was the most satisfied with his last outing before the USPGA Championship in Kentucky. "I drove and putted well, and I could do very well in the USA," he said.

Westwood, richer by £116,660, is now fourth in the European rankings, and is certain to win a place in England's team for the Dunhill Cup at St Andrews in October. That alone justifies the decision he made in April to entrust his game to the former Tour player Peter Cowen, now teaching at Lindrick.

"I have made almost an overnight transformation," said Westwood. "My first coach, John King, was very good but I had got into a play-safe attitude. Peter has got me hitting the ball more aggressively in recent weeks."

Westwood's only problem, after earning his place in the play-off with an inward 33, was to avoid the last-hole error he made in the Italian Open, when he blocked his drive badly and took six when a par four would have made him the champion.

But here each of his play-off drives found the middle of the fairway, and his putter did the rest.

The Guardian Weekly

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Week ending August 18, 1996

Yeltsin leaves trail of broken promises

James Meek in Moscow

THE most risky campaign promise Boris Yeltsin made was never spoken out loud. It was all in the twist of his big body as he jived on stage at those Russian rock concerts on the election trail in May. "Read my hips," he was saying. "I'm fightin' fit."

It was a broken promise for which his age and health, rather than the sickness of the body politic he heads, was responsible. But when the ailing president took the oath of office in the Kremlin last week, the live television audience had plenty of other broken promises to remember.

The guests present at the short inauguration ceremony were conscious that the greatest stain on Mr Yeltsin's first presidency — the decision to intervene in Chechenia and the subsequent death of tens of thousands of people — had not been atoned for.

The boom of artillery across the Moscow river in a 30-gun salute to honour Russia's newly sworn-in president was answered a thousandfold from the charnel house of Grozny as Russian forces fought the third battle for the Chechen capital with unabated ferocity this week. Scores of soldiers, rebels and civilians have died. Alexander Lebed, Mr Yeltsin's national security adviser, is to be given unprecedented powers to solve the crisis, the ex-paratroop general announced last week.

Fears that Mr Yeltsin's health will prevent him from serving a full four-year term, ushering in a backstage power struggle for a successor, were not allayed by the president's awkward appearance at the inauguration ceremony. He strode sternly on to the stage in the Kremlin, in front of some 3,000 guests, and stood stiffly for 16 minutes, swearing the oath with his hand on a copy of the constitution. He spoke slowly and slurred his words as he undertook to "loyally serve the people".

The ceremony, broadcast live on Russian television, was intended to lay down a tradition for the democratic handover of power. Its last-minute scaling down — from an hour-long event on the Kremlin's Cathedral Square to a brief civil ceremony — increased doubts about Mr Yeltsin's strength.

Mr Yeltsin's pre-election theatrical peace-treaty signing ceremony with the separatist leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev in the Kremlin, and his lightning visit to Chechenia, where he told Russian troops that the war was over and they had won, have turned out to be bogus.

So, too, says Valentina Melnikova of the Committee for Soldiers' Mothers, was the president's clear undertaking in May that Russian conscripts would no longer be forced to serve in Chechenia. "They're sending conscripts there, just the same as they did before. Nothing has changed," she said. "They just move one regiment out and put another one in."

Promises to spend billions of dollars rebuilding the ruined city of Grozny are also in question. Presidential and governmental decrees on Chechen reconstruction are on a list of 56 high-cost pledges, many linked to the presidential election campaign, due to be axed by a team set up to keep the budget deficit within the limits agreed with the International Monetary Fund.

Details of the team's work, published in Sevodnya newspaper this week, show that the list includes a decree on Chechen reconstruction worth about $3 billion. Another is a $45 million programme to protect mafia-threatened judges, a key item in Mr Lebed's plans to end crime and corruption.

The economics minister, Yevgeny Yasin, admitted last week that the government did not have the money to fulfil the president's promises. "All instructions of the president will be fulfilled. The major issue concerns the term, and when it will be possible to find these assets," he said.

But it is Mr Yeltsin's fragile health rather than his hollow promises that really threatens his hold on power. Few who voted for him believed his cornucopian pledges of peace and roubles by the cubic metre.

"Nobody expected he would pay. Everybody understood they were just election promises. The same with Chechenia. Politics everywhere is a cynical business," said Sergei Markov of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Moscow.

Comment, page 12

Police intervene as Turkish Cypriots beat a Greek Cypriot during clashes across the partitioned island at the weekend. A Greek Cypriot was killed and more than 50 people from both sides of the communal divide were injured during a protest against Turkey's occupation of the north PHOTOGRAPH: COSTAS KYRIAKIDES

Khmer Rouge troops turn against Pol Pot

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok

CAMBODIA'S western border with Thailand is expected to be the scene of another upsurge in fighting — this time between different units of the Khmer Rouge.

The commanders of two Khmer Rouge divisions, with an estimated 3,000 troops occupying strategic points on the border, are breaking from Pol Pot and suing for peace with Phnom Penh.

Barely two months after the emergence of rumours — never substantiated — that Pol Pot was dead, a schism has developed in the leadership of the Khmer Rouge.

Speculation now centres on the intentions and whereabouts of Ieng Sary, one of Pol Pot's oldest and closest associates. Khmer Rouge radio has denounced him for treachery, saying he should be executed for allowing government troops into guerrilla-held territory.

The diplomatic rumour mill suggests that Mr Sary, who is also closely identified with the brutal horrors of Khmer Rouge rule, may have arrived in Bangkok to negotiate a deal with Phnom Penh to be allowed in from the jungle.

Cambodia's joint prime minister, Hun Sen, once bitterly hostile to a deal with Khmer Rouge leaders, appears to have made an about-turn, saying last week that Mr Sary could not expect a ministerial appointment but promising defectors official positions and property.

The two divisional commanders controlling Phnom Malai and Pailin have issued statements saying that they now follow Mr Sary and are seeking national reconciliation. They also appear to be marshalling their forces to repel possible attacks by forces loyal to Pol Pot and his hardcore military chiefs.

Mr Sen, who prematurely claimed last week that the two commanders had defected, said on Monday that they had now linked up with government forces near the border town of Poipet, and hailed them as "our brothers and sisters". He added that the Khmer Rouge command had ordered its forces to attack them.

Khmer Rouge radio said on Monday that separate committees had been appointed to manage the Malai and Pailin areas. But the leadership now faces either a bloody operation to reclaim them or the loss of key positions in the defence of the Khmer Rouge heartland.

Malai has long been an impregnable base, offering easy access to Thailand and within striking range of the only major road linking Thailand and government-controlled towns. Pailin lies near the centre of lucrative Khmer Rouge gem-mining and timber operations.

The defection of several thousand troops is a body blow to Pol Pot's rump command, already thought to have shrunk to fewer than 10,000 men. If Malai and Pailin slide into government control, Pol Pot's army will be largely confined to a remote hinterland of forest and mountain.

MoD admits nuclear weapons accident

Seumas Milne

THE Ministry of Defence on Monday began to buckle under the pressure of evidence and admitted there had been accidents involving nuclear weapons at American air bases in Britain. But it dismissed such incidents as "minor".

The MoD claimed formerly secret RAF records of a serious accident involving a "2,000lb nuclear weapon" at Wittering, near Cambridge, had meant to refer to a dummy bomb training accident. It denied that newly revealed documents exposed 44 years of cover-up.

Despite the admission, the MoD clung to its longstanding insistence that "there has never been an accident involving damage to a nuclear weapon in the UK". A spokeswoman said: "At the most we are talking about scratches to nuclear weapons. Somebody might have dropped it a foot on to the ground, which would probably not even result in a scratch, but it is classified as an accident."

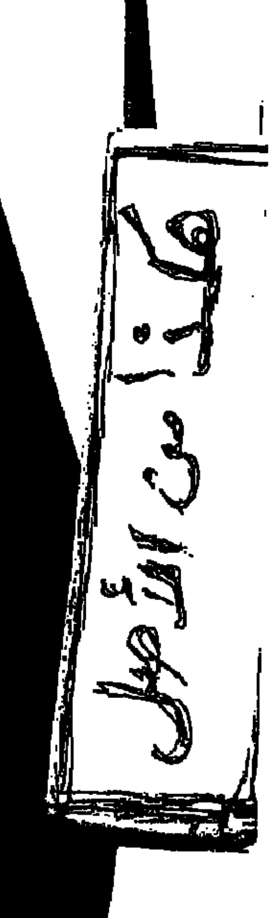
She was unable to explain why a squadron commander at RAF Wittering had reported "serious damage to a nuclear weapon" in May 1959. It was too long ago to investigate.

The Government's attempts to explain away documentary evidence of a nuclear weapons accident is unlikely to satisfy demands for a full account. The denials were dismissed as implausible by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which has been the conduit for several leaked documents.

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Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30



Reaching out across Northern Ireland's divide

ARTHUR HUDSON, writing about last month's Orangemen parades in Northern Ireland (August 11), seems to think that centuries of conflict in the region stem from a severe lack of "superior judgment" on the part of the inhabitants, and that when faced with these seemingly unending conflicts, governments are usually helpless and can do nothing but occasionally use force to intervene.

Rather than attack the people of Northern Ireland's "moral behaviour" during the past 300 years, Mr Hudson should consider the role of both the British and Unionist establishments in keeping conflict alive for their own ends. The problems that the people of Northern Ireland are now suffering are the direct result of the use of the divide-and-rule strategy employed by the British and loyalist establishment, to keep both Catholic and Protestant workers at each other's throats.

This tactic is at work today, meaning the potential for unity in the region to defeat oppression is being sabotaged both by the British government and the unionist leadership. The unionists may have shouted about their "right to march", but the Orange Order marches have little to do with cultural identity or their civil liberties. Faced with declining membership (125,000 in the 1960s down to 80,000 today), and the old promises of better jobs and housing being undermined by the current economic situation, the Orange Lodges are just becoming more nasty in their attempts to keep vicious sectarianism alive.

John Major seems intent on doing everything in his power to scuttle the peace process. The Government refuses to start the talks with the IRA until it resumes its ceasefire and surrenders its weapons, even though the British army, while it will never be beaten, admits that it cannot win the "war" either. Meanwhile Sinn Fein wins its largest share of the vote and is refused a place at the table. By making impossible demands, Mr Major has turned the process into a farce.

The "achievement of peace" Mr Hudson refers to does not come through a few enlightened individuals such as Mandela or Gandhi. There is always movement from below, from the majority. Gandhi's strategy, if anything, stifled in many ways India's fight for independence. His commitment to pacifist action suited both the British and the rising Indian élites. Any instance of Indian peasants and workers (both Hindu and Muslim) fighting British rule in more direct ways (refusing to pay taxes, strikes, naval mutinies) was attacked by Gandhi.

The British finally left in 1947. Gandhi's non-violent, "man-of-conscience" role ensured that the Indian ruling class were in place to take over the reins from the British. For the majority of the Indian population, poverty and communal violence are still present in their lives.

The working class, not "great men", create and move history along. What is needed in Northern Ireland is unity across the two communities: they will realise that they have more in common with one another than with the establishments in either London or Dublin, or with Orange Lodges trying to keep them apart with bigotry.
Giorgio DeSantis,
Melbourne, Australia

Real gold at the Games

THE UNITED STATES won the most Olympic medals with 101. But if, for each country that won medals, you divide its population by its medal count, the winner is Tonga, with one per 0.1 million, followed by the Bahamas and Jamaica. Cheers to Tonga, but such statistics mean little in the case of very small countries (eg, Sri Lanka's lack of medals doesn't signify absolute athletic nullity).

If you look to larger countries, it's Australia (one per 0.413 million) and Cuba (one per 0.417 million) in a virtual dead heat. The US comes in 36th, at one per 2.45 million, just behind its former Olympic nemesis, Russia. But I give the Olympics to Cuba, on the grounds that it got one medal for each $1.08 billion of GNP, outdistancing Australia by a factor of four (on that score, the US was 48th, fourth from last amongst countries winning medals).
(Dr) Gary Kemp,
University of Waikato,
Hamilton, New Zealand

FOLLOWING the rampant nationalism and drug scandals of the recent Olympic Games, I would like to propose that both problems be resolved by banning national teams and replacing them with teams sponsored by drug companies. This would have the dual advantage of giving all competitors equal access to performance-enhancing chemicals (rather than the present situation, where only those with criminal connections can benefit), and stopping the unpleasant displays of national chauvinism that are (I think everyone would agree) not appropriate to the post-cold war world.
John Watson,
Darmstadt, Germany

Morality in a vacuum

IF MORAL relativism were the only alternative to moral absolutism (Comment, July 14), our morals would truly be in trouble. Fortunately, we need not resort to relativism to find a morality that is able to take account of "circumstances, conditions and culture". Non-relativistic traditions of moral thought have always recognised that circumstances are an important factor in making moral judgments.

This is fortunate, since to adopt relativism as an ethical theory is to give up on making moral judgments altogether. Moral relativism takes the descriptive truth that different persons and societies have different moral beliefs, and proceeds, unhampered by logic, to the conclusion that all these beliefs are true in their own way. This leaves us with no criteria for assessing ethical behaviour. We then have no grounds for objecting to female genital mutilation, child slavery or genocide.

There are strong reasons to object to moral absolutism. But to replace these absolutes with relativism is to leave a vacuum at the heart of our moral and social life. This seems an accurate depiction of our current malaise. Morality should not be left to religious persons. Religious and non-religious persons alike must seek substantive values and principles capable of sustaining our common life. These ethical norms may be sensitive to circumstances without being relativistic. To advocate moral relativism is to abandon the search for that renewed moral and social vision that we so urgently need.
David Clough,
Department of Religious Studies,
Yale University,
New Haven, Connecticut, USA

Proprietorial about rights

IN THE 1783 Treaty of Paris, the fledgling United States committed itself to "earnestly recommend to the legislatures of the respective states to provide for the restoration of all estates, rights and properties which have been confiscated, belonging to real British subjects . . ." I believe nothing was ever done on those lines at a state or federal level (nor, to the best of my knowledge, was a real British subject ever defined).

Now that the US has seen the light and will no longer tolerate revolutionary governments expropriating property without compensation, can we assume that the next order of business for Messrs Helms and Burton will be to repair the omission?
Brian A Jones,
Brooklyn, New York

RE THE appropriation in 1959 of US property in Cuba, has everyone forgotten Guantanamo Bay?
Monica D White,
Portland, Oregon, USA

It's not just cricket

YET AGAIN we see how out of touch with real life our legal system is, that 13 days of court time could be wasted on a squabble between three middle-aged children, when more pressing matters hang fire for lack of court time (Libel jury stumps Botham and Lamb, August 11). The legal profession does itself no good by pretending that all civil suits are of equal importance when it is obvious that scarce resources are being sidelined to deal with anachronistic and outmoded trivia.
John Leach,
London

IT IS not only the vexed question of ball-tampering but the broader and more troubling issue of racism in cricket that has been left unresolved by the recent libel trial.

The two issues are related. Imran's argument, confirmed by Geoff Boycott and Mike Atherton in court, has been that so-called ball-tampering was commonplace in cricket and that therefore it was invidious to single out the Pakistanis as offenders. Behind this double standard, Imran suggested, lay racism. Headlines such as "Pak Off The Cheats" (The Sun) and "Nailed: Paki Cheats" (The Mirror), and articles in the cricket press that repeatedly branded the Pakistanis "volatile" and "fanatical", reeked of prejudice.

The video evidence which Matthew Engel claims "clearly showed [Botham] manipulating, quite legally, a ball that had gone out of shape" was no more or less conclusive than the video evidence that was used to condemn an entire team as "cheats".
Mike Marqusee,
Department of Sport Studies,
Roehampton Institute, London

Briefly

YOUR LEADER (Taking the tigers by their tails, August 11) brings into sharp focus the issues of corruption, poverty, rich-poor gap, drugs and crime that plague the states of Asia. But the people of these countries are also concerned with the denial of their civil and political rights by regimes that depend for their existence on the support of the US or other Western countries.

The substance of democracy lies in the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights, an independent judiciary, a free press, the right to political dissent and the principle of rule by reference to the will of the people. There is no either/or relationship between socio-economic issues and political rights and processes. Both deserve concern. The real Asian miracle will come when both challenges are squarely and simultaneously met.
(Prof) Khurshid Ahmad,
Chairman, Senate Standing Committee on Finance, Senate of Pakistan, Islamabad, Pakistan

IN RESPONSE to Professor John Rex's appeal for aid for the "new" South Africa (July 28), it is always interesting when leftwing intellectuals put so much emphasis on access to formal education, the very means by which the ruling classes in Western societies have seduced potential leaders of the poor and disadvantaged into serving the status quo.

Precisely this seems to be happening in South Africa, where black professionals are on the increase but where little has been done to redistribute wealth and thereby improve the lot of the majority of citizens. More equitable access to educational institutions is unlikely to change this so long as that country remains entrenched in its capitalist ideology.
Anna Westermann,
Aberystwyth, Dyfed

WITH reference to "What an ideal" (Comment, August 4), it is on record somewhere in the theatre world that the exclamation mark of the title Oklahoma! of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical that opened in New York in 1943 was certainly worth a million dollars or more, as anyone would agree.
Penny Geldart,
Aylmer, Quebec, Canada

AS EUROSTAR whisked us out of the Channel Tunnel London-bound, a young boy (who had been deep in thought up until this point) stood on his seat, stared longingly out of the large gleaming window, and screamed excitedly: "*Papa, papa! Maintenant on va voir les vaches folles!*" The boy's father hushed his son, and looked around rather sheepishly.
(Dr) Noah Jamie Robinson,
Saint-Maurice, France

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Fax: 44-171-242-0985 (UK: 0171-242 0985); e-mail: weekly@guardian.co.uk.

UN alarm at Bosnia voter intimidation

Julian Borger in Split

THE United Nations special human rights investigator for former Yugoslavia added her voice at the weekend to a gathering chorus of complaints about intimidation during voter registration for next month's Bosnian elections.

Amid growing evidence that the process is being used to reinforce a three-way partition of the country, Elisabeth Rehn said: "We have a strong feeling from the complaints we have got that there has been harassment around this registration."

Human rights groups and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) — which will oversee the elections on September 14 — have already expressed concern that the registration process is being rigged.

Serb leaders have been singled out for using it to pursue strategic aims of ethnic segregation, but there are increasing signs that Croat authorities are also attempting to manipulate the vote to split Bosnia's already fractured Muslim-Croat federation.

Serb, Croat and Muslim communities are expected to back nationalist politicians. Where they cast their votes will largely dictate Bosnia's ethnic map.

On several occasions in recent weeks, the OSCE has accused Bosnian Serb authorities and the Yugoslav government of pressing Serb refugees to register in their new constituencies rather than their pre-war homes. Thus they will vote in Republika Srpska — the Serb-run entity within Bosnia — and help reinforce its ethnic purity.

Most Muslim refugees, in contrast, have asked for absentee ballots so they can cast their votes in their pre-war constituencies, which are now in Republika Srpska. This is in line with the Bosnia's policy of maintaining Bosnia-Herzegovina as a unified, multi-ethnic state.

The OSCE says it is too early to say whether Sarajevo authorities are using pressure to achieve that goal.

Meanwhile the European Union scored a hard-fought diplomatic victory in Mostar last week when Muslim and Croat local leaders agreed to run the town in southern Bosnia together in a multi-ethnic council. The deal — reached after four days of intensive negotiations — will almost certainly avert a humiliating withdrawal from the town by a European administration which took on Mostar's reunification as a special project two years ago.

The EU special envoy, Sir Martin Garrod, said he expected the EU presidency to halt withdrawal preparations already under way and to approve a five-month extension of the mission, "with the aim of assisting and stabilising" the new joint council.

The deal ends a month-long boycott of the new council by Bosnian Croats after they lost local elections in June.

But the Mostar crisis has produced some troubling pointers. A British official in the town said that the refusal by Croat hardliners to accept an election result in a town of 60,000 people had embroiled diplomats and political leaders across the world. "In September, multiply that by a hundred," the official said.

The agreement is unlikely to have an immediate impact on life in Mostar. A group of Croat men outside the EU headquarters in Mostar last week vowed no Muslim men would ever step into western Mostar.

In yet another major development, former Yugoslavia moved closer to a post-war settlement last week when the two key strongmen, Presidents Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia and Franjo Tudjman of Croatia, signalled their intention to conclude a mutual recognition pact later this month.



An American engineer repairs a road damaged during three years of fighting near Tuzla PHOTOGRAPH: ALMIR ARIHAUT

At a hurriedly-organised summit in an exclusive resort outside Athens, the two leaders agreed a joint statement paving the way for full diplomatic recognition at a further meeting in Belgrade within the next few weeks.

The Greek prime minister, Costas Simitis, who organised and hosted the summit near Athens with United States and western European backing, described the talks as a big step towards an overall Balkan pence, although it was not clear whether the two presidents had resolved any of their many differences.

Le Monde, page 13

Indonesian police arrest 10 over riots

John Aglionby in Jakarta

THE Indonesian police announced on Monday that they had arrested the leader of the leftwing Democratic People's Party (PRD) for masterminding the riots that rocked Jakarta last month. At least nine other activists were also detained in a weekend sweep.

Budiman Sudjatmiko, aged 26, was caught in a Jakarta suburb at the weekend. He had been in hiding since the riots on July 27 and 28.

The army has accused the PRD of spreading hatred of President Suharto and having links with the banned Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

A military spokesman said documents seized from Sudjatmiko showed he and the PRD had "clear links" with the PKI.

Sudjatmiko is expected to be charged soon with subversion and inciting people to riot during a free-speech forum at the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). The maximum penalty for subversion is death.

The rioting erupted when troops stormed the PDI headquarters while it was occupied by the supporters of the party's ousted leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri. The authorities believed the gathering had become too militant and critical of the government.

Three people died in the unrest, dozens were injured and more than 250 arrested. Many are still missing.

Last week President Suharto said that Sudjatmiko had "conducted activities which had the characteristics of insurgency", but the authorities have yet to produce any evidence of such action. The PRD is an alliance of student and labour organisations and has fewer than 1,000 members.

Sudjatmiko's mother, Sri Lestari, denied her son was a communist or involved in undermining the government. She said: "We didn't raise our children to be that way. The reports that he masterminded the riot hurt me. I don't believe them." But she admitted that she had not seen much of her son since he dropped out of university several years ago. "We're going to pray for him and let Allah decide his fate," she said.

Praemodya Ananta Toer, a prize-winning writer, and Sukmawati Sukarnoputri, Megawati's sister, were summoned by the police on Monday for questioning in connection with the unrest.

Toer has never been convicted of a criminal offence but was in jail for 14 years for alleged links with the PKI. Most of his writings are banned for supposedly containing Marxist teachings.

Megawati herself spent nearly seven hours in Jakarta's police headquarters last week being questioned about events leading up to the riots. Megawati, who was told to report for further questioning this week, did not play up her first public appearance since the riots, leaving by a side door to avoid journalists and a small crowd of supporters waiting outside. She gave no clue as to the thrust of police inquiries.

Her sister Sukmawati is not known to have any strong political associations.

Analysts believe the unrest was not caused by political subversion but by frustration at economic inequality.

Flash flood brings tragedy to Spanish Pyrenees campsite

David Harrison in Jaca and Julia Hayley in Madrid

THE REGION of Aragon held three days of mourning last week for the holidaymakers at a Pyrenees campsite who were swept to their deaths by flash floods.

With the death toll standing at 83 so far, the debate was concentrating on how the disaster at Las Nieves could have been prevented.

The meteorological office had warned of heavy storms due in the area. A children's summer camp 20km away from Las Nieves had been evacuated as a precaution, it emerged, but Las Nieves and sites nearby were not.

Both the meteorological office and the civil protection department were adamant that this type of storm was highly localised. "These storms are difficult to pinpoint exactly. It could rain very hard 10km away, and where you are nothing falls at all," said Juan San Nicolas Santamaria, the civil protection director.

The camp was built 12 years ago in a fold of the Pyrenees beside the Gallego river where it is joined by the smaller Aras, which runs from the mountains behind the site.

The flow of the Aras is controlled by man-made barriers. Experts have suggested that trees and rocks washed down by the rain might have built up behind a barrier, creating a temporary dam until the whole structure gave way, unleashing the flood on campers below.

"The campsite had an excellent reputation and no one had questioned its set-up," said Santiago Lanzuela, governor of the Aragon region.

Francisco Ayala, a director of the Technical and Geo-mining Institute, was less sure. He told the Spanish news agency Efe: "A campsite like Las Nieves on the flood plain of a potentially torrential river , . . is the chronicle of a catastrophe foretold."

At Jaca, a Pyrenees resort town near Biescas, 145km east of Pamplona, the bodies of the dead — dug out of the mud and marshes — were arriving in white plastic bags last week. They were carried down steep stone steps to the local ice rink for identification.

Three bodies were found 1km from the Las Nieves campsite. At least two more were found near the dam in Sabiñánigo, 15km away.

Most of the 657 campers registered at the site have now been accounted for — though an official said it was difficult to know how many others might have been in the area when the storm hit.

Rwanda joins blockade to put squeeze on Burundi

Chris McGreal in Bujumbura

BURUNDI'S new military-led government has denounced sanctions against the country as a crime against humanity after Rwanda last week joined a regional blockade by closing its borders and cutting air links.

After days of vacillating, Rwanda became the last country in the region to enforce sanctions, plugging the only remaining exit route from Burundi by land, water or air.

Foreigners and wealthy Burundians who had scrambled for seats on the last flights out of the country were left stranded when Air France and the Belgian airline, Sabena, cancelled their services because Burundi's neighbours refuse to let them to land or refuel on their soil if they fly to Bujumbura.

African leaders announced the sanctions last month after Burundi's former military leader, Pierre Buyoya, again seized power. A regional summit demanded the restoration of constitutional rule and unconditional talks between Burundi's Tutsi-dominated establishment and Hutu rebels.

The leader of the Hutu rebels, Leonard Nyangoma, last week welcomed the sanctions. In a statement he called on people to disobey the new rulers and said he expected sanctions to force the government into negotiations.

Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania had already halted all air and ground traffic to Burundi and appeared to be rigorously enforcing the blockade. Tanzania was not allowing even individuals to cross its border.

American diplomats say privately that they do not believe Mr Buyoya is in control of his army. They fear the political situation is less certain than might appear in the relatively quiet capital. The US embassy last week advised its citizens to leave the country immediately.

The overwhelmingly Tutsi army has stepped up the civil war with a new push to clear Hutu rebels and civilians from areas of central Burundi and create safe havens for Tutsis.

The UN children's fund, Unicef, warned that its work with about two million people would be seriously impaired if vaccines, drugs and rations for malnourished children were not delivered.

Vigilantes fight Cape drugs war

David Beresford in Johannesburg

A MUSLIM taxi driver was shot dead near a mosque in Cape Town last week as Sydney Mufamadi, South Africa's police minister, announced a crackdown in the drugs war that has erupted in the parliamentary capital.

The dead man was reported to have taken part in a march organised by Muslim vigilantes who are challenging the gangs in the Coloured suburbs.

Local politicians and police exchanged insults as a row flared over who was to blame for the violence, in which a gang leader was shot and burnt to death and 18 people injured in a shoot-out between vigilantes and alleged drug dealers.

George Fivaz, the national police chief, is investigating allegations that police, who were present at the gunbattle, failed to intervene to save the murdered man.

Rashaad Staggie, who ran the Hard Living gang with his twin brother Rashid, died in front of press cameras when he tried to drive through a heavily armed mob of vigilantes marching on his house. He survived an initial shot to the head at point-blank range, but was set ablaze with petrol as he tried to flee, and was then riddled with bullets as he died in a gutter.

The killing has been followed by threats of revenge and counter-revenge. Rashid Staggie declared at his brother's funeral that there would be war. In return, the vigilantes — who have declared a *jihad* against gangs — have threatened to use suicide bombers if Muslim religious leaders or mosques are attacked.

Dullah Omar, the justice minister, and Leon Wessels, the provincial police chief, later held a crisis meeting with local civic and religious leaders. Politicians blamed the violence on the tardiness of the judicial authorities in dealing with the gangs that flourish in Coloured residential areas.

Frank Kahn, the Cape's attorney-general, dismissed the criticism as "cheap political opportunism", but conceded that police and government departments had failed the population.

It is believed that members of a Shi'ite extremist group, Qibla, may have been among the vigilantes who style themselves the "People Against Gangsterism and Drugs" (Pagad).

But Farouk Jaffer, Pagad's "chief co-ordinator", said that the organisation was not a "militant fundamentalist or extremist organisation". He angrily objected to the characterisation of its members as vigilantes. "It is, in fact, comprised of sincere, law-abiding people who are opposed to the high level of drug trafficking in South African society."

Mr Jaffer said the organisation had issued an ultimatum to Mr Omar in May to take action against drug lords within 60 days. When the ultimatum expired last month, they delivered ultimatums to 16 gang leaders, warning them to stop their activities.


A vigilante group member aims a revolver during the violence that erupted during a march in Cape Town at the weekend PHOTO: SASA KRALJ

● A furious row within South Africa's government about "cash for favours" intensified at the weekend when the president, Nelson Mandela, admitted that the country's casino king, Sol Kerzner, facing bribery charges, had donated R2 million ($447,000) to the ruling African National Congress.

But Mr Mandela denied any attempt had been made to interfere in a criminal prosecution against Mr Kerzner in exchange for the donation.

The Week

A FLORIDA jury awarded damages totalling $750,000 to a former smoker, Grady Carter, aged 66, who lost part of his lung to cancer in 1991. The award was made against a US subsidiary of BAT, the British tobacco giant. Nearly $1.5 billion was wiped off its share value in London.

Washington Post, page 15

CRASH investigators have all but ruled out the possibility that a bomb in the forward cargo hold of TWA Flight 800 caused the explosion that brought down the Boeing 747 last month, killing all 230 on board.

A PANEL of US scientists believe they have found "evidence of past life on Mars", based on 2½ years of research on a meteorite found in 1984 in Antarctica, which they believe was catapulted off Mars 16 million years ago.

Return ticket, page 22

MEXICAN authorities have captured a suspected drug lord, Pedro Lupercio Serratos, known as the chief of the Jalisco drug cartel, with his brother and two other men, the attorney-general's office said.

TURKEY signed a $20 billion natural gas deal with Iran, insisting that the agreement did not violate the new US sanctions against the Iranian government. The sales will earn Iran an estimated $1 billion a year.

Turkey's pragmatism, page 7
Iran fights back, page 15

ABDULRAHMAN Mohamed Babu, a key player in the run-up to the Zanzibar revolution in 1964 and a significant figure in the Pan-African movement of the fifties, has died in London at the age of 71.

THE politician U Hla Than has died in a Burmese prison, aged 52. He was a member of the Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, and had spent six years in Insein Prison outside Rangoon.

GULF war bombing of Iraqi chemical weapons plants sent clouds of low-level nerve gas towards allied positions in Saudi Arabia, US investigators have admitted.

FRENCH riot police were accused of "stupid and scandalous" behaviour after a 300-strong force staged a dawn raid to remove from a Paris church 10 immigrants on hunger strike to fight expulsion, only for the demonstrators, backed by more protesters, to return later in the day.

INDIA said it would not bow to international pressure to remove its threat to block a global nuclear test ban treaty, saying the government had the support of its 900 million citizens.

US agrees 'oil for food' plan for Iraq

Mark Tran in New York

THE United States this week finally accepted a United Nations plan allowing Iraq to sell oil to buy food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies to ease the burden of sanctions.

Madeleine Albright, US representative at the UN, removed the last obstacle to the oil-for-food plan when she announced approval of strict procedures to prevent Saddam Hussein from getting hold of the proceeds.

The UN oil plan will mark Iraq's return to the oil market for the first time in six years. Iraqi oil is expected to flow again in September. The UN may take four or five weeks physically to put in place a comprehensive monitoring regime.

Under a memorandum of understanding signed in May and subsequently modified at US and British insistence, Iraq agreed to a highly intrusive UN presence. Monitors will be allowed to roam anywhere in the country, checking markets and clinics, to make sure that emergency supplies are reaching the neediest people.

As part of the plan, $150 million of each $1 billion in oil sales will be spent on aid to the Kurds in northern Iraq, now effectively an autonomous region under Western protection.

Ms Albright emphasised that while "the important point here is to try to get humanitarian assistance to the people within Iraq", the sanctions against the government would remain intact.

Washington Post, page 15

Tamils despair as peace plan sidelined

Suzanne Goldenberg in Colombo

SRI LANKAN Tamils, who once saw President Chandrika Kumaratunga almost as a saviour, fear that she is falling back on a military solution to end the 13-year civil war.

Tamil Tiger guerrillas have government forces tied down just outside the town of Kilinochchi, the last population centre under rebel control. It seems clear that both sides are suffering heavy casualties in the army's slow advance on the northern town.

The defence ministry claimed that it lost 16 soldiers on one day last week, while killing 60 guerrillas. The rebel Voice of the Tigers radio said 200 soldiers had been killed since the battle for Kilinochchi began last month.

The scale of civilian suffering is also bound to be high. The International Committee for the Red Cross said it fears that 100,000 people have fled Kilinochchi and are living out in the open. With food and medical shipments to the north blocked for a month, fears are growing for their welfare, Gérard Peytrignet of the ICRC said.

The capture of Kilinochchi is vital if there is to be a land link between the northern Jaffna peninsula, seized from the Tigers last December, and the government-controlled mainland.

The confrontation follows the Tigers' attack on the Sri Lankan army last month, when the rebels overran the military camp at Mullaitivu and killed more than 1,100 troops.

Mrs Kumaratunga came to power two years ago as the only Sinhalese politician to talk of a negotiated peace. Her peace plan, which would devolve powers to regional councils, was the boldest attempt yet to satisfy the demands of the Tamil minority for self-government.

But Tamil leaders say her plan lacks support even among members of her ruling People's Alliance — let alone the opposition United National Party. They also fear that she is now leaning towards a military solution to a war that is projected to cost 50 billion rupees ($930 million) this year alone.

An all-party parliamentary committee has been mulling over the constitutional reform package since January. Tamil politicians fear that when it resurfaces, it will be significantly diluted. That would discredit their own claims to serve the interests of their people better than the Tamil Tiger guerrillas, who have rejected the plan outright.

Diplomacy fills Arab skies

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

WITH the Middle East peace process on hold and tentative new alliances forming on the frontiers of beleaguered Iraq, summer has been a season of hectic diplomatic shuttling.

Already this month no less than nine high-level missions have criss-crossed the skies as governments jostle for advantage amid quick-fire political developments.

Three main factors have obliged the leading players to increase the pace: the election of a rightwing Israeli government in May; rising concern about the stability of Iraq; and mounting resentment of the United States' latest heavy-handed stance towards Iran.

On the face of it, the restoration of Likud to power in Israel has done most to galvanise Arab diplomacy. But after an initial show of summit-level solidarity in Cairo in June, there has been little enthusiasm for a united approach.

The new Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, outraged Arab leaders with his hardline statements during and after the election, rejecting a Palestinian state and supporting renewed Jewish settlement of the occupied territories. But more recently he has moved quickly to smooth ruffled feathers.

Syria, however, has rejected an offer by Mr Netanyahu to resume peace talks, saying his proposal had nothing to do with peace.

Visiting Cairo and Amman, Mr Netanyahu persuaded the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, and Jordan's King Hussein that Israel remains committed to peace.

The president of the Palestinian National Authority, Yasser Arafat, was also seeking support in Egypt and Jordan last week.

President Hafez al-Assad of Syria has been assiduously promoting his country's demand for unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights with help from Egypt, which sees itself as the main peace-broker in the region.

Mr Assad has also had a rare signal of support from Jordan. King Hussein recently flew to Damascus and praised Mr Assad for his commitment to peace and implicitly offered to help mediate.

The king has been in Saudi Arabia this week. He was greeted at the airport by King Fahd — a sure sign that he has been forgiven, publicly at least, for siding with Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Gulf war.

Finns give blacks icy reception

Jon Henley in Helsinki

JAMES was not looking for trouble. Sitting at the night-club bar, he saw the white guys attack the two Somalis and watched, horrified, as the bouncers joined in with kicks and punches. Then they turned on him — "Hey, nigger" — and he was out on the pavement with the Somalis. Badly bruised, he was off work for two weeks.

Noor was wheeling his baby daughter down the street one afternoon last summer. Four or five men appeared out of nowhere saying nigger this, sambo that, you're taking our money, you're stealing our women. Then one of the men pulled his little girl out of the pushchair by her hair.

Aisha has had white girls spit in her face; Rachid cannot remember how often he's been hit; Redouan was put in hospital by two skinheads, and then lost the court case. Paula, a white girl married to a black man, remembers the middle-aged woman who helped lift her pram into the bus, then dropped it and swore when she saw the baby's colour.

Emerging from 800 years of foreign occupation and half a century of cold war isolation, whiter-than-white Finland, a European Union newcomer, is not finding it easy to welcome foreigners, particularly those whose skin colour is different from the Swedes, Russians and Estonians who make up the majority of its 69,000 immigrants.

"It's terrible," said James, aged 36, a dance teacher from London. "I thought these attitudes had died 30 years ago. They stare at you, they shout at you from cars, they assume you're a refugee. When they're drunk, they're unbelievable."

Dana, a tall 21-stone bodybuilder and former Chicago policeman, said he is "paranoid as hell". He lives in a neat Helsinki flat with his Finnish wife, Minna, and baby son. "I'm big, but when they're drunk I'm their worst nightmare come true. They have to fight or they're not Finnish men."

Finland has experienced little of the organised racial violence that has made headlines in Sweden and Germany. But, said Dana, black people face a climate of mistrust and ignorance.

"People just stare, all the time, then look away when you catch their eyes," he said. "And their comments! That's what finally gets you. I had a friend who was at the zoo with his family. A little Finnish kid came up and licked his hand — like to see what it was made of."

There are about 12,000 black immigrants in Finland out of a total population of 5.1 million, said Helge Valama, head of the recently established European Union Migrants Forum in Helsinki.

"Blacks have the hardest time," he said. "The country was effectively closed after the war, it was a very hard life here, and the Finns are worried for their jobs, their women — you name it."

Mr Valama, a leading member of Finland's 10,000-strong Romany community, believes the government is complacent and contributes to the problem. "There is structural racism in Finland, it runs right through the bureaucracy," he said. "Romanies have been here for 500 years, and our own candidate is still not allowed to head the committee for Romany affairs."

Nearly every black immigrant has a story of bureaucratic injustice. Housseine, a Moroccan interpreter at a refugee centre in the city of Tampere, said he knows of only one black person who has won a discrimination or abuse case.

"Some policemen say quite openly: 'Fight back when you're attacked, but don't hang around till we arrive, because the law isn't on your side'," he said. "The visa people hold your passport for six months while they decide if you can stay, even if you have a Finnish wife. If you want to travel, sure, you can have your passport, but then the whole entry process starts over again."

Ole Norrback, the European affairs minister and one of the few politicians to argue for higher immigration, admits there are difficulties. "I don't think Finland is racist, but Finns are cautious about foreigners, for good historical reasons. It's important for Finland that we have more foreigners, and we have no choice now we're in the European Union. But politicians have to lead the way and some are still opposed."

But bureaucracy is not all that needs to change. The Golden ABC, a popular children's reader now in its 12th edition, shapes Finnish attitudes young. "The Negro washes his face," it teaches toddlers, "but it never gets any whiter."

Errors delayed warning to police of Atlanta bomb

Ian Katz in Atlanta

A WARNING that a bomb was about to explode in Atlanta's Centennial Park failed to reach authorities at the scene because an emergency operator did not know the park's address and telephone lines to the police control centre were engaged, it has emerged.

Last month's bombing killed one woman and injured more than 100. A Turkish cameraman who died of a heart attack as he rushed to the scene is also being treated as a homicide.

Authorities at the park began clearing the area after they were alerted by Richard Jewell, the security guard who later became the prime suspect. But critics have suggested that there might have been fewer injuries if they had been warned earlier.

The man, who called at 12.58am on July 27, said only: "There is a bomb in Centennial Park. You have 30 minutes." Atlanta's police chiefs say the call was handled in accordance with a protocol designed to deal with bomb warnings.

However, a recently released police transcript reveals an almost farcical sequence of events that delayed transmission by at least 10 minutes. Included is the following exchange between the operator and a police dispatcher:

Operator: "You know the address of Centennial Park?"

Dispatcher: "Girl, don't ask me to lie to you."

Operator: "I tried to call ACC [the Atlanta police department's command centre], but ain't nobody answering the phone . . . But I just got this man talking about there's a bomb set to go off in 30 minutes in Centennial Park."

Dispatcher: "Oh Lord, child. One minute, one minute . . . Uh, okay, wait a minute. You put it in, and it won't go in?"

Operator: "No, unless I'm spelling Centennial wrong. How are we spelling Centennial?"

On her second attempt to call the police command centre, the line was bad and she was told to call again. When she did get through, an unidentified official told her he did not have the park's address, adding: "What y'all think I am."

The operator eventually obtained the address from an office at Centennial Park itself and transmitted the report of the warning call at 1:08:35. However, it was 1:11:10 before a police unit was contacted.

Nine minutes later, a police officer radioed: "Be advised that something just blew up at Olympic Park."

Embarrassment has also mounted as FBI agents have failed to find conclusive evidence against Mr Jewell. The bureau is under pressure to explain why he was named as a leading suspect.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Kemp may give Dole a fighting chance



The US this week

Martin Walker

SAN DIEGO: The Republicans are fielding the odd couple this year. Robert Dole's selection of Jack Kemp as his running mate was a very real surprise because the two men have been political enemies for nearly 20 years. And it will take rather more effrontery than Dole has shown so far to explain why he has picked to replace him — in the strong possibility that at 73 he does not survive a full term of office — a man he once suggested had too often played football without a helmet.

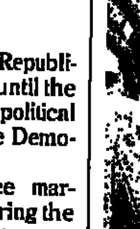
Describing himself as "a bleeding-heart conservative", Kemp would be a marvellous orator if he could only stop talking. He has a relentlessly sunny disposition and an endearingly puppy-like way of bounding with energy. His very presence is calculated to exhaust the morose and lethargic Dole.

It will also take effrontery by Kemp to campaign on a Republican platform when he is known to disagree, violently, with almost half of it. Violence is something with which Kemp is identified. I am told by one who was in the Oval Office at the time that Kemp once jumped over the furniture, in the presence of President Bush, to get to grips with the then secretary of state, James Baker.

There had been an angry argument over Soviet behaviour in the Baltic states, and Baker, impatient at Kemp's amateurish moralising, invited him to perform an anatomical impossibility upon himself. Kemp, still athletic in late middle age after his brilliant career as a professional quarterback with the Buffalo Bills, leapt over a chair or two. Baker beat a hasty retreat. Kemp chased him down the corridor towards the Roosevelt Room, and was about to embrace him warmly by the throat when the two men were separated by the diminutive Brent Scowcroft, the national security adviser.

The Dole-Kemp strategy sessions also promise to be lively. Kemp despises the anti-immigration measures that Dole supports, from the callous pledge to withdraw public services such as schools and hospitals from the children of illegal immigrants, to the offensive demand that US citizenship no longer be automatically given to those born on its territory.

Kemp also despises the mean-spirited racial attitudes that underpin the Republican manifesto pledge to abolish affirmative action for blacks and other minorities. In lessons learnt from his footballing days, Kemp is one of the few Republicans visibly at ease with racial matters, and has said his Republicans "will not be complete" until the party becomes as natural a political home for black voters as the Democratic party.



Kemp, a passionate free marketeer who believes in restoring the gold standard, is openly contemptuous of the Pat Buchanan-inspired plank in the new Republican platform that condemns the World Trade Organisation. This is the international arbitration and judicial body that resolves trade disputes under the Gatt treaty, and it is one of the issues that Buchanan made his own. Indeed, the Republican platform looks uncannily like the Buchanan manifesto.

"This is very Buchanan," boasted Bay Buchanan, whose brother gave Dole an early whipping in this year's primaries. She crowed that the party platform and the convention delegates are further to the right than she and her brother "ever dreamed" possible. The result is that save for tax cuts and opposition to abortion, there probably is not too much in the Republican manifesto that Kemp can honestly support.

"Sometimes I don't know where I fit in the Republican party," Kemp confessed earlier this year, as he announced that he was endorsing Dole's rival for the Republican nomination, the millionaire publisher Steve Forbes. Honour required no less. Forbes and Kemp have been brothers-in-arms in a group called Empower America, dedicated to winning the Republican party back to the low-tax and fast-growth economic nostrums that nearly bankrupted the country in the Reagan years.

As the aide to then-Governor Reagan of California in the 1960s, Kemp had converted his boss to the new supply-side theories. Now he is claiming to have converted Dole, too, and certainly Dole's tax-cutting promises ring less hollow with Kemp there to back them up.

The Republicans want to believe that Dole means it. Suddenly blossoming on to the lapels of every Republican delegate to the San Diego convention, the little blue sticker that says "15%" is supposed to be the miraculous additive that will power the Dole campaign.

As electoral bribes go, it is generous enough. Fifteen per cent off everybody's taxes sounds fair, and the Republican television ads are ramming home the basic message that a family of four on average earnings will be $1,500 better off next year. The Republicans are being more reticent about the fact that a family of four on three times average earnings will save $10,700, and even quieter about the halving of capital gains taxes.

The Democrats find the Dole tax pledge to be a target-rich environment, and have already begun their counter-ad barrage. The first shot shows film of Dole in 1980, 1982, 1984 and 1988 denouncing the "voodoo economics" of tax cuts that simply balloon the deficit. The real hole in the Dole tax plan is what it does to the public services that voters tell pollsters they want to keep. The Dole plan promises $548 billion in tax cuts over the next six years, of which $147 billion will be defrayed — he assumes — by the higher tax receipts that should come with faster growth.



Winning ticket? Presidential candidate Bob Dole introduces his running mate, Jack Kemp, to supporters in Kansas over the weekend

PHOTOGRAPH: STEPHAN SAVOIA

So he has still to find close to $400 billion in spending cuts. And this is on top of the $390 billion in cuts that have already been agreed by Congress for the next six years. Dole says he will not touch defence, Medicare, social security or interest on the national debt. That leaves him less than a third of the federal budget to attack, and it will mean the virtual eradication of the departments of commerce, energy, education, housing, transport and agriculture.

It will be, as Dole boasted last week of his promise to close the Internal Revenue Service, the end of government as we know it. And that was the mistake the Congressional Republicans under Newt Gingrich made last year, when they allowed Bill Clinton to stand firm as the defender of public spending on programmes the voters decided they needed.

The fact is that the Republican party is now a lot further to the right than most Americans. This is quite deliberate: witness the gathering that took place over the weekend on plush Coronado island, which dominates San Diego bay. Most of the private events that matter to the Republican party took place there, away from the hurly-burly and television cameras of the convention itself.

The most important meeting was closed to all but members, and the membership list is secret. The newsletter through which the group sticks together deliberately maintain the conspiratorial flavour, with "For Your Eyes Only" stamped on the title page. You will not find the Council for National Policy (CNP) listed in any telephone book, and there is no discreet brass plate bearing its name on any exclusive townhouse or office building. It is only 15 years old. You do not apply to join, you can only be invited. Membership is reported to be around 500.

The CNP is the high command of US conservatism, an élite operation devoted to keeping the Reagan coalition in being. It was founded in 1981 by the small group of Californians and western multi-millionaires who made up Reagan's kitchen cabinet. The Coors brewing family and Rich DeVos of the AmWay direct-sales giant still provide the financial backbone. The current president is Ed Meese, Reagan's attorney-general.

The executive board includes the Reverend Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition, and Phyllis Schlafly, the anti-gay and anti-abortion activist who runs the Eagle Forum. It also includes Larry Pratt, who heads Gun-Owners of America, of whom we last heard when Pat Buchanan was embarrassed by the organisation's attendance at a neo-Nazi rally with the Aryan Nation.

These folk stick together. They do not trust the mainstream media to cover the convention in the right way. Indeed, one of the members is Reed Irvine, who runs Accuracy in Media, which tries to document his claims of liberal bias and buys full-page ads in the mainstream press to publicise the wilder allegations around the Clinton's Whitewater embarrassments.

Rather than leave the convention in the hands of the closet socialists who run CBS, NBC and CNN, the Council decided to offer its own coverage. DeVos gave his CNP chum Robertson $1.3 million to underwrite a special telecast of the convention on Robertson's Family Channel. If that contains too much religion, good conservatives can switch to National Empowerment TV on cable, founded by another CNP stalwart, Richard Viguerie, who made his first fortune through direct-mail fund-raising for conservative causes.

The fact is that the Republican party is a lot further to the right than most Americans

The CNP's brand of conservatism is striking in its casual approach to economic policy. Karl Marx could hardly believe that an organisation so deeply ideological could be quite so agnostic about something as fundamental as free trade. The CNP quite happily embraces the Buchanan argument that free trade is too damn good for foreigners and too challenging for unprotected US workers. But the CNP newsletters have supported the North American Free Trade Agreement and other landmarks of the new free-trading system.

The CNP cares far more about social behaviour than it does about politics in the traditional sense. It distrusts Washington and loathes big government and taxes, and instinctively opposes any attempt to suggest that there may be a public right to interfere with private property. But it is quite prepared to use the power of the law and government to control private behaviour.

It insists that the government should never have the right to stop anyone developing his or her property as he or she wishes, even if the property is ecologically fragile wetlands. But the government must have the power to imprison any doctor who dares carry out an abortion. A government that cannot be trusted to educate children should, however, be trusted to censor books.

It is a deeply confused conservatism. Its heritage runs back through Reagan to the first conservative standard-bearer in the post-war period, the Arizona senator Barry Goldwater. His pledge, that "I'd rather be right than be president", is still the battle cry of a conservatism that prefers righteousness to power. And yet Goldwater is these days shunned by the CNP because he abides by the old libertarian traditions of the US right.

"Always have been gays in the military, and always will be. Hell, I don't care if they are straight, so long as they shoot straight," Goldwater declared three years ago, when he came to the rescue of President Clinton's controversial policy. This month, Goldwater decided to endorse Clinton.

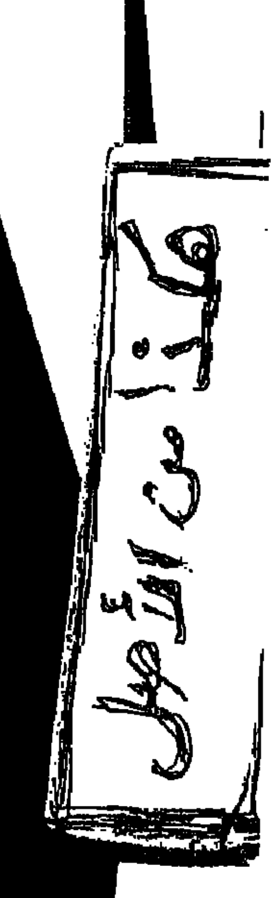
Confused, sectarian and narrow-minded as it is, the CNP is the group with the wealth and the media outlets. And in the Christian Coalition it has the nationwide organisation to dominate the Republican party.

"We are not big enough as a movement for the Republican party to win with us alone," the Christian Coalition's director, Ralph Reed, explained in San Diego last week. "But we are big enough so that they cannot win without us."

Through the CNP, the Christian Coalition has just the allies it needs in the broader and more secular reaches of conservatism. But it is now an open question whether the traditional Republican coalition can survive this intolerant new power of the CNP. It is not only liberal Republicans who support abortion who fear being driven out, but also gay Republicans, those who support gun control, those who question the need for prayer in schools, and those who think Republicans should protect the environment.

In asserting their dominance over the party in San Diego, the CNP and the Christian Coalition are forgetting the key to the success of their hero, Ronald Reagan. Political parties win by widening their coalitions to bring people in, not by keeping them out of an élite and secretive island conclave. Still, the garrulous and attractive Jack Kemp may give the appearance of inclusion for a while. This election may at last be livening up.

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Turkey takes a pragmatic line

John Hooper in Ankara asks whether the fundamentalist bark of the new government has proved worse than its bite

IT HAD just turned midnight. Thursday had become Friday — the Muslim holy day.

In the Mon Amour club, at least 20 women in skimpy dresses were sitting at a bar festooned with red lights. Across town, in a casino beneath the Hilton hotel, silken-haired croupiers were shuffling cards and spinning wheels as another night's gambling started.

On the Kral pop video channel, a beefcake with designer stubble was getting out of a BMW convertible in pursuit of a mini-skirted girl. A graphic proclaimed that the song was in the Burger King Top 20.

It takes a deep swig of *raki* to believe this is a city run for the past two years by an Islamist mayor, the capital of a country which for the past two months has been led by an Islamist prime minister. It appears that Necmettin Erbakan and his Refah (Welfare) party are blazing a trail to Islamic pragmatism.

Since coming to power in coalition with Tansu Ciller's True Path party, Turkey's Islamists have made a remarkable succession of U-turns.

They have agreed to renew the mandate of the United States-led air force which operates out of southern Turkey to protect Iraq's Kurds. In opposition, they had called it an "occupying force".

They have decreed another four months of emergency rule in the southeast, where Turkish security forces are fighting Kurdish guerrillas. In opposition, they had demanded an end to it.

Despite years of anti-Zionist rhetoric, Refah deputies have voted for an investment protection agreement with Israel. And, having repeatedly criticised the use of arbitrary measures by previous administrations, the new government is using "authorisation laws" that give a decree the force of an act of parliament.

Refah's record in national government is consistent with its performance in city halls. In Istanbul, which also has an Islamist administration, Refah councillors have made only timid gestures towards creating a more devout society.

They have banned loud music after 1am and restored the traditional Ramadan practice of firing a cannon at the end of each day's fasting. They had also planned to repaint kerb markings in Islamic green and white, but quickly abandoned the idea when it was explained that this would violate international transport agreements.

Foreigners resident in Istanbul say the most obvious change is improved services: the streets are cleaned more thoroughly, the rubbish collected more often.

For many, it is now clear that the bark of Turkey's Islamists was worse than their bite.

"The Refah party is sending out signals that it is no different from other parties," one of Turkey's most respected columnists, Mehmet Ali Birand, wrote last month. "Like other parties, it says one thing in opposition but adopts a different approach in government . . . Personally, I believe that this is highly encouraging for the future."

What is at stake can scarcely be stressed too much.

Turkey has been a keystone of Western security policy, to an even greater extent that Iran was under the Shah. It has half a million men in the military and is viewed by the US and most of its allies as a bastion against nationalism in Russia, fundamentalism in Iran and potentially troublesome governments in Syria and Iraq. The scope for conflict were Turkey, like Iran, to "go Islamic" would be immense.

Yet Western diplomats seem relaxed about Refah's arrival in government. They note that the party has been playing by the rules of Turkish democracy for 13 years. Its avuncular leader has been doing so for even longer. They argue that Refah is not fundamentalist but Islamist, and that, if a comparison is to be made, it should be with western Europe's Christian Democrats.

Despite repeated calls to the party's offices in Istanbul and Ankara, Refah was unable to provide a spokesman to discuss these points. But put them to Nilufer Narli and she purses her lips in incredulity. Dr Narli, an associate professor at Marmara university who has just completed a study of Refah's campus activities for the Ford Foundation, offers a definition of the party membership that would apply to fundamentalists elsewhere.

"An Islamist," she says, "is someone who takes a political position with regard to Islam; who believes Islam is religion and state, and that the two should not be separated."



Refah and its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, have made a remarkable succession of U-turns since coming to power

She says Refah is an umbrella group that includes conservatives as well as radicals, but finds the parallel with Christian Democrats unconvincing. "Christian Democrats want regular elections, a multi-party system and a liberal, free-market economy," she says.

Refah has played the democratic game for more than a decade. "But the real question is: are Refah's members ready for an 'historic compromise' with the system, like the one the Italian Communists aspired to, or are they practising *taqiya* — the concealment of one's true aims for the welfare of Islam?"

She suspects the answer depends on the individual member. "Maybe Erbakan himself wants an historic compromise, but others . . ."

Ersin Kalaycioglu, professor of political science at Bosphorus university, has examined Refah from a different position by studying its voters. He found it was strong among those opposed to the establishment: the Kurds in the southeast, the very poor and the lower middle-class craftsmen threatened by the advance of neo-liberal capitalism.

"The real difference between Refah voters and those of other parties was how they approached Islam," he says. "If you read Islamists' newspapers, you'll see what they're telling their voters is: 'You haven't given us enough votes to govern alone. We have to act like this'. Their argument is, 'Give us more power, then see what we can do'."

Many secular Turks are worried that their country's allies are being lulled into wishful or muddled thinking by the Islamists' unexpected regard for Western interests. Last month, a spokesman for the US state department was quoted in the Turkish press as saying that what mattered to Washington was not whether a society was secular, but whether it was democratic.

"I ask myself: how can you have secularism without democracy?" says an Istanbul journalist who asked not to be named. "Is there a single country in the world which is non-secular yet democratic?"

Inmates are tortured, say jail doctors

Chris Nuttall in Ankara

MOST doctors in Turkey who examine detainees believe nearly everyone who is taken into custody is tortured, according to Physicians for Human Rights.

The group, based in Boston, Massachusetts, said doctors were unwilling accomplices to torture, coerced by police to cover up the physical evidence of abuse.

The results of its two-year investigation into torture in Turkey were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association last week. PHR interviewed physicians and torture victims, carried out a survey among 60 doctors who officially examine detainees and analysed more than 150 official medical reports on prisoners.

PHR said 96 per cent of doctors surveyed believed that torture was a problem in Turkey, while 60 per cent believed that nearly everyone who was detained was tortured. It said this was probably an underestimation, as 76 per cent did not consider beatings alone to amount to torture.

Its interviews with forensic doctors indicated that some had observed evidence of torture in the cases of hundreds, even thousands, of detainees in recent years.

"The Turkish police may respond to physicians' attempts to perform proper examinations of torture survivors with overt threats of physical harm to the physician, by destroying the medical reports, or by simply obtaining a favourable report from a more compliant physician," said Dr Vincent Iacopino, a co-author of the report. "Since physicians are state employees, they are vulnerable to threats that they will lose their positions if they do not comply."

Torture victims complained of doctors sitting at a distance from them and failing to carry out a physical examination before recording in their reports that they found no evidence of injury.

The PHR report gives numerous accounts of torture from male and female victims, including suspension above the ground, beatings, sexual violations, testicle squeezing, electric shocks and spraying with cold, pressurised water.

In a letter sent with the report last week to the new prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, PHR said: "We believe that your government has the unique opportunity to face the fact of torture in Turkey and eliminate the practice once and for all."

Mubarak urged to intervene in heresy case

Ben Faulks in Cairo

AN Egyptian human rights group has urged President Hosni Mubarak to intervene after the country's highest court upheld a ruling that a university professor must divorce his wife because he was deemed to have renounced Islam.

The decision last week by the Court of Cassation against Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, aged 54, has sent shockwaves through the secular community, and it is likely to discourage moderate Muslims from entering mainstream politics.

"This is a dark day for the legal system and shows the extent of Islamist influence," said Abdel Aziz Mohammed, chairman of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights and a defence lawyer in the case. Although the ruling cannot be appealed, the defence team said it would push the court to revise its decision.

The organisation urged Mr Mubarak to intervene immediately, "not only to protect Professor Abu Zeid but to defend the whole of Egyptian society".

Mr Abu Zeid incensed hardline Islamists when, as a professor in Islamic studies at Cairo university, he said the Koran should be looked at within its socio-political context, and Islamic teachings should evolve with society.

In June 1995, a lower court ruled that Abu Zeid's writings on religion "attacked" and "incited disrespect" for Islam, and ordered his divorce on the grounds that he was an apostate and therefore could not be married to a Muslim. The case was brought under *hesba*, a principle of Islamic law allowing individuals to bring cases against those they feel have offended Islam.

Mr Abu Zeid, who fled to the Netherlands with his wife, Ibtihal Younis, after the trouble erupted, contested the decision. The verdict had been widely expected to be overturned.

Ms Younis said of the lawyers who brought the case: "They are the losers. They have outraged people who were neutral and inflamed the world against them." The ruling had "no effect" on the couple because they intend to stay together, she said.

The Egyptian government, anxious at the number of such cases being brought to court, had passed legislation that meant *hesba* cases had to go through the state prosecutor's office. And in what was considered a convenient get-out clause for the Court of Cassation in the Abu Zeid case, the government had barred individuals from bringing cases unless they were directly involved in them.

"The government provided a technical way out, but the court refused to take it," said one human rights worker.

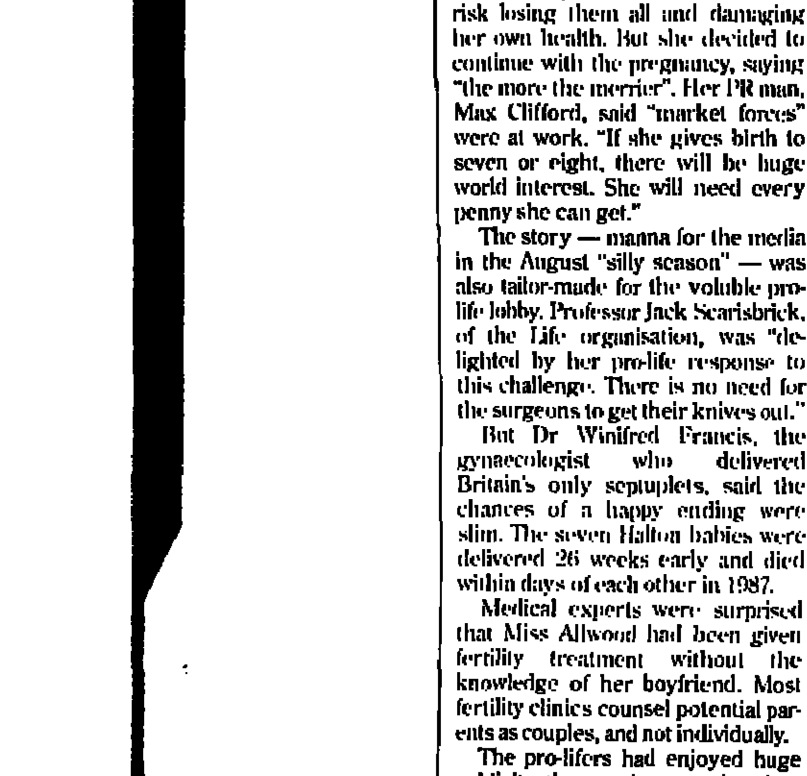
The former chief of the state's high security court, Said al-Ashmawi, said the decision "shows Egyptian justice no longer respects the law but is ruling on the basis of ideological trends".

But Yussef al-Badri, who helped bring the case to court, said: "No one will dare to think about harming Islam again . . . we have stopped an enemy of Islam from mocking our religion."

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The Week in Britain James Lewis

Chequebooks come out for story of 8-baby birth



THE MORAL and ethical arguments about abortion, fertility treatment, medical confidentiality and chequebook journalism were revived by the revelation that a single mother, Mandy Allwood, was pregnant with octuplets and had been given fertility treatment without her boyfriend's agreement. She had, moreover, sold her story to a Sunday newspaper for an estimated £100,000, and hired a PR man in the hope of raising another £1 million in newspaper and sponsorship payments.

Miss Allwood, who had previously had an abortion after an accident and a miscarriage last year, had been advised by doctors to have some of the eight embryos aborted so as not to risk losing them all and damaging her own health. But she decided to continue with the pregnancy, saying "the more the merrier". Her PR man, Max Clifford, said "market forces" were at work. "If she gives birth to seven or eight, there will be huge world interest. She will need every penny she can get."

The story — manna for the media in the August "silly season" — was also tailor-made for the voluble pro-life lobby. Professor Jack Scarisbrick, of the Life organisation, was "delighted by her pro-life response to this challenge. There is no need for the surgeons to get their knives out."

But Dr Winifred Francis, the gynaecologist who delivered Britain's only septuplets, said the chances of a happy ending were slim. The seven Halton babies were delivered 26 weeks early and died within days of each other in 1987.

Medical experts were surprised that Miss Allwood had been given fertility treatment without the knowledge of her boyfriend. Most fertility clinics counsel potential parents as couples, and not individually.

The pro-lifers had enjoyed huge publicity the previous week, when doctors at a London hospital said that they were prepared to carry out an abortion on a woman pregnant with twins who, because of financial hardship, wanted only one of them. Pro-life groups raised more than £80,000 to help her, and went to court to try to stop the abortion, only to learn that the operation had been carried out a month earlier.

FOR THE first time since Tony Blair became its leader, the Labour party was given reason to fear that it might – just might – fail to win the next general election, which is no more than nine months away. A Guardian-ICM poll survey showed a cut of three points in Labour's lead over the Tories in July. Labour's advantage has fallen in each of the last four months and now stands at 12 points, down from its 21-point lead in April.

The survey showed Labour at 45 per cent (enough for a comfortable election victory); Conservatives at 33 (up 3) and the Liberal Democrats at 19 (down 2). Another poll, in the Daily Telegraph, also showed a 0.8 per cent fall in Labour support but had the party at 54 per cent, the Tories at 27 (up 0.9), and the Lib-Dems at 14 (down 0.5).

Both polls indicate that, if the Conservatives are recovering momentum, it is at the expense of the Lib-Dems. There are also signs that the "feel-good" factor, which some Tories had despaired of ever seeing, is returning in the high street and the housing market in time to bring them electoral relief.

AS THE guns blazed out on the grouse moors in their annual paean to the Glorious Twelfth, the Shooters' Rights Association was trying to head off handgun legislation by warning that the cost of compensating gun owners could reach £1 billion.

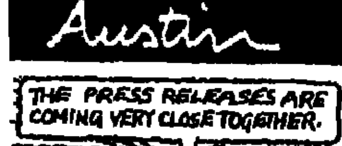
The Cullen inquiry into the killing of 16 children by a licensed gun-owner at Dunblane in Scotland is expected to recommend a ban on the ownership of handguns. In attempting to introduce a ban, however, the Government could find itself facing a tough battle with the large shooting lobby within its ranks.

Shooters' Rights claims that individual shooters would be entitled to full compensation, as would the owners of shooting ranges and gun clubs, and shooting-related businesses, which employ up to 10,000 people.

HARD on the heels of the benefits fraud hotline — the "snitchers' line" launched last week by the Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley — the Government is now planning another hotline for people who want to report dishonest employers. The benefits hotline attracted more than 12,000 calls in less than a week, but hundreds of them were from people reporting cheating employers. Many of the calls were about employers in small businesses, and involved National Insurance fraud, which costs an estimated £170 million a year.

SCHOOL-LEAVERS this week receive their A-level exam results, which determine whether or not they qualify to go on to university. There is evidence that nearly half of those who qualify now choose to study close to home, and that one in 10 pulls out before accepting a university place.

Students find it cheaper to live at home. And most of those who decline a university place want to take a "year out" — usually to earn money — or opt to take their chances in the job market, since a degree is no longer a guarantee of employment.





Rescue workers at the crash site south of Watford Junction in Hertfordshire. One woman was killed

Safety fears as trains collide

Guardian Reporters

RAIL CRASH experts are trying to discover how two trains collided last week, killing a woman and injuring 69 people, four seriously.

Investigators have retrieved two aviation-style "black boxes" from the wreckage that could tell them what happened. It is thought to be the first time they have featured in a rail crash inquiry.

Railtrack said the investigation would focus on why two trains were travelling on the same line. Initial reports said an empty southbound train was changing tracks south of Watford Junction, Hertfordshire, when it and a crowded 5.04pm from Euston to Milton Keynes collided. Emergency services fought to release up to 40 passengers trapped inside one carriage.

Experts said the empty train appeared to be correctly crossing to a safe track when the full passenger train struck it. They speculated that the latter either received a faulty signal or passed a warning signal.

Witnesses said the driver and guard of the empty train threw themselves out of the cab when they realised a crash was inevitable.

The accident occurred on the main west coast line between London and Glasgow.

Peter Rayner, a former BR manager who was in charge of the West Coast Main Line for six years, said: "Because the track is owned by Railtrack, the trains are owned by someone else, and the driver employed by someone else, an inquiry is difficult to conduct because everyone wants to protect their own interests.

"There is no one railway authority to take its own inquiry and feed that to the Health and Safety Executive. They are all tainted with commercialism."

Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, expressed "my deepest sympathies for the families of the dead and injured" and praised the rescue services. He pledged that the investigation findings would be made public.

Witnesses said carriages smashed into the overhead power lines when the impact forced them off the rails. One injured passenger described how he was thrown across the carriage. Mick, a builder from Milton Keynes, said: "There was a huge bang and a crash as the wheels of another carriage came through the window. People were flying everywhere. When it stopped there was blood pouring down the faces of people near the broken window. Someone smashed the window of the emergency door but the overhead wires were wrapped round the train and sparking.

"A girl with a broken ankle had to be carried on to the track but most of the other people were able to walk."

As they walked away, he said, they saw a carriage on its side. "We could see about 40 people in it. They could not get out but very soon firemen were there helping them."

The dead woman's body was retrieved four hours after the collision. Police named her as Ruth Holland, aged 54, books editor at the British Medical Journal.

British Transport Police said between 300 and 400 people were travelling on the train.

Driver error later emerged as the most likely cause of the crash, after investigators spent a day trawling through the wreckage.

● Fresh fears about safety on the privatised rail network surfaced after five track workers removed from the site of a "near accident" at Britain's busiest rail junction were found to have bogus safety documents.

The incident took place earlier this month near Clapham Junction, and was detailed in Railtrack's internal daily incident log, leaked to the Labour party.

Men replacing coping stones were put at risk when an engineers' train came on to the section of the line on which they were working. The driver was able to stop despite "lack of communication".

'Rich man's opera' pays out for noise

THE dictionary definition for nimby reads: "The initial letters of the slogan 'not in my back yard', expressing objection to the siting of something unpleasant, such as a nuclear waste dump, in one's own locality." Now "nuclear waste dump" has been replaced by "opera" in the latest bout of nimbyism, *writes Dan Glaister*.

The Local Government Ombudsman ruled last week that five residents of Garsington, Oxfordshire, should receive £200 each in compensation for noise pollution from the nearby open air opera.

Villagers were divided over the ruling. Some saw it as a victory for common sense, while others attacked it as the product of blind class prejudice.

Pensioner Michael Hudson, aged 65, who lives opposite the manor, said: "On one occasion the organisers actually had the cheek to ask me to stop mowing. I'm not against opera but the sound would carry so much that we could hear it in our living room. It's not just the performances, the rehearsals can go on all day and they practise the same piece over and over again."

But company director Clive Holloway, aged 56, defended the opera: "The noise element has been exaggerated," he said. "I live very close to the manor and can rarely hear any noise. A lot of people think opera is for snobs and that is why they are against it."

An open air opera festival has been held at Garsington manor for seven years. In 1994 the owner, Leonard Ingrams, was fined £1,000 after being convicted of causing noise pollution in a case brought by the local council. The conviction was quashed in a crown court appeal.

The ombudsman has found South Oxfordshire district council guilty of maladministration by ignoring soundproofing restrictions laid down when the summer season was given a licence. He said villagers suffered "obtrusive disturbance" and told the council to review its procedures for granting a licence.

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Documents confirm nuclear cover-up

Seumas Milne

THE Ministry of Defence faces the prospect of a humiliating retreat from its 44-year insistence that there has never been a nuclear weapons accident in Britain, after overwhelming evidence emerged last week of British and American atom bomb damage and radiation in southern England in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Government's attempts on Monday to explain away documentary evidence of an accident — contradicting years of MoD denials — is unlikely to satisfy growing demands for a full account.

Labour and Liberal Democrats pressed the Government to come clean after the first confirmation that it has repeatedly lied about atomic bomb accidents. The proof is from a 1959 accident report by 49 Squadron at RAF Wittering, which recorded that during "Exercise Mayflight" a "2,000lb British nuclear weapon was accidentally jettisoned ... severe damage resulted to the weapon".

An MoD spokeswoman said on Monday that it was not yet clear whether such an accident had taken place. In any case it could not involve a nuclear weapon because such exercises never used live warheads. "It would have been an inert training round, or dummy," she insisted.

Other documents passed to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) show that government scientists believed another accident, involving a US aircraft at Greenham Common in Berkshire in August 1957, had contaminated the surrounding area with uranium.

The MoD initially stuck with its formula that "there has never been an accident involving damage to, or release of radioactivity from, a nuclear weapon in the UK". Challenged over the report of the Wittering accident — the kind of incident that government experts have accepted could detonate a nuclear warhead directly — a spokesman said at the weekend that the department never commented on leaked classified documents.

But the Government's wall of silence started to crumble when it later emerged that the 37-year-old RAF log had already been declassified by the MoD itself and recently made available in the Public Record Office at Kew.

John Reid, Labour's defence spokesman, warned that the Government was "digging itself into a deeper and deeper hole over this, rather than treating the British people as mature adults".

The revelations about US accidents at the Greenham Common base, now closed, will heighten concerns about the cluster of leukaemia cases in the Newbury area. The "excess incidence" of childhood leukaemia was first highlighted in a 1987 British Medical Journal study. The Government has reopened an investigation.

Last month, a secret 1961 report by government scientists was leaked to CND. The scientists said the high concentrations of uranium around Greenham Common could have been caused only by damage to a nuclear weapon, and suggested a link with an aircraft fire at Greenham in February 1958. US authorities always denied the aircraft carried an atomic bomb.

The latest Greenham leaks show one of the most senior Aldermaston scientists, F D Morgan, attributed the contamination to another US aircraft fire in August 1957, and pinpointed uranium contamination.

Eddie Goncalves, CND's spokesman, called for a public inquiry into the contamination of the Greenham area, and a Royal Commission into the history of such accidents. It had been a "tale of deceit, cover-ups and a callous willingness to put innocent lives at risk", he said. According to CND's sources, there have been at least 20 accidents in the UK — one as recently as 1988.

Alleged 'dirty tricks' against Wilson return to haunt Tories

Rebecca Smithers and Seumas Milne

THE Tories look set to become embroiled in a new pre-election sleaze row this week when the cabinet minister William Waldegrave faces allegations that he played a key role in the "dirty tricks campaign" against the Labour prime minister Harold Wilson in the 1970s.

Mr Waldegrave — Chief Financial Secretary to the Treasury and a survivor of the "Arms to Iraq" scandal — has been named by a Channel 4 television documentary as a "middle man" for senior Tories who wanted to spread rumours about the then Mr Wilson's private life and MI5-inspired stories that he was a KGB agent.

The veteran spy journalist Chapman Pincher recalled in his 1978 memoirs that in the early spring of 1974 he learnt that the then Tory leader Edward Heath wanted to delay Wilson from calling a snap election, fearing the Tories would lose. Wilson had been elected with a parliamentary minority and looked likely to be returned with a sizeable majority.

Mr Pincher described a meeting with an unnamed Tory intermediary: "I was put in touch with a Tory party official, not now in Mrs Thatcher's entourage, who told me that the current thinking was that any means of discouraging Wilson from going to the country in June should be brought into play.

"While the leadership still disliked the whole idea of using personal denigration, these were desperate times."

Mr Pincher has now named Mr Waldegrave — who was then Mr Heath's chief of staff — as the intermediary.

Mr Waldegrave was also a close associate of Lord Rothschild, who introduced Mr Pincher to the "spycatcher" Peter Wright and was head of the think tank Mr Waldegrave served on in the early 1970s.

The programme concedes that Mr Heath may well not have known of the approach to Mr Pincher, and the former premier has written to the programme-makers strongly denying the allegations.

Harold Wilson was the target of a series of smear campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s, which tried to use his earlier business links with the USSR to brand him a Soviet agent.

The crowd waves at Knebworth, where Oasis played to 125,000 fans undaunted by the rain. The band did, however, appear upset by Manchester United's Charity Shield success; *Loch 'n' roll, page 26*

MPs damn elderly care proposals

David Brindle

ATTEMPTS by ministers to defuse controversy over payment for long-term care of elderly people were last week humiliatingly brushed aside by a Conservative-dominated committee of MPs.

The Commons health select committee said the Government's proposals for partnership schemes, whereby the state would match any private insurance cover for long-term care, would be "at best a useful part" of a broader package that required further thought.

In scathing comments about ministers' presentation of the consultative proposals, launched with a fanfare in a green paper in May, the committee said: "We deprecate the Government's failure to provide even rough-and-ready costings of its various options. Until such costings are provided, the taxpayer is in effect being invited to sign a blank cheque."

The proposals are designed to enable people to avoid having to sell their homes to pay for long-term care by offering protection of assets in return for purchase of private insurance. A person who bought £40,000 insurance cover would get up to £60,000 protection on top of the £16,000 maximum available now.

The committee says in a report that while such schemes may benefit some people, it is impossible to make any proper judgement because of the Government's refusal to provide costings — even when asked by the committee to do so.

The MPs are even more damning of the Government's other main idea, that people should be allowed to opt for a smaller initial occupational pension on retirement in return for a larger sum later that would be used to fund any long-term care.

The report calls for pensions to be kept separate from any mechanism for meeting care costs.

Although the committee acknowledges a widespread perception that arrangements for long-term care funding are unfair — not least because people do not see their home as an asset in the same sense as savings — it says that reports of a crisis in paying for such care are unsound or "downright alarmist".

Britain does not face as steep an increase in numbers of elderly people as do many other countries. Moreover, the projected increase over the next 25 years in the number of over-85s is smaller than the rise between 1971 and 1994.

While there are problems in meeting care costs, such problems are "more manageable than many recent commentators have suggested" and it may be "both possible and affordable" to continue with the existing system. If change is considered, however, one option backed by the committee would be development of flexible equity-release schemes enabling people to use the value of their homes to pay for care while keeping them until they die.

The committee's report received a mixed reaction. Tessa Jowell, the Labour shadow health minister, welcomed its call for a rethink of Government proposals, saying: "The Tories have cynically whipped up fears about a 'demographic time-bomb' to justify their plans to pass the costs of long-term care from the state to the individual."

In Brief

THE HIGH Court has ruled that the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, misdirected himself when he ordered the return to Hong Kong of 60-year-old Ewan Launder, a businessman who fears he could face the death penalty if forced to stand trial on a £4.5 million bribery and corruption charge once the colony is taken over by the Chinese.

TWO men were each given a month in prison arising from an attempted raid on a British Aerospace factory in support of the four women who took hammers to a Hawk aircraft destined for East Timor.

BRITAIN'S share of the bill for the Eurofighter has risen by a further £1.25 billion in spite of efforts to reorganise the four-nation aircraft project along more economical lines. The UK taxpayer's final bill is now expected to be £15.4 billion.

KENNETH HALL, a farmer who shot a thief with a 12-bore shotgun after seeing him stealing from his car, was found not guilty of causing grievous bodily harm with intent.

TWO women wrongfully arrested at Twyford Down during a demonstration against the construction of a motorway have won £17,000 damages from the police. Twenty women have now won civil actions over the demonstration.

TWO British teenagers, Sally Griffiths, aged 17, and Claire Martin, aged 19, were each sentenced to five years in jail by a Moroccan court and fined £380 for possessing and trading 11lbs of cannabis resin.

LABOUR has pledged to introduce laws to force political parties to declare all donations over £5,000 as part of a crackdown on political funding.

THE British Medical Association said that it would resist any move by MPs to make doctors responsible for authenticating the mental stability of firearms applicants.

DETECTIVES investigating the rape and murder of a Plymouth teenager have asked to study DNA samples from the killer of Caroline Dickinson, who died on holiday in France nine days later. A Plymouth detective said: "This is a port town with a ferry link to France. You can't ignore that sort of thing."

SIR NEVILL MOTT, the joint winner of the Nobel Prize for physics in 1977, has died at the age of 90.

YVONNE Irvine, one of the Church of England's first women priests, has been killed in an accident while on holiday in Zimbabwe. She was 54.

Marchers change their tune in Ulster

David Sharrock

THE year's most tense weekend of loyalist and republican parades in Northern Ireland ended with relief that the worst of the marching season is over.

Thousands of republicans rallied in Belfast on Sunday to commemorate the 25th anniversary of internment but heeded calls from the platform to disperse quietly. Security was tight and police kept flag-waving loyalists behind a cordon of armoured vehicles as the Sinn Fein supporters passed close to the Shankill Road.

The rally took place after sporadic overnight violence in Londonderry. An Apprentice Boys rally there on Saturday had threatened to plunge Ulster back into widespread violence, but the Protestant organisation defused the tension by accepting a police ban on marching along a stretch of the city's walls which overlook Catholic Bogside.

Barbed wire, steel rods and concrete barriers blocked the route which 250 local members of the Apprentice Boys had hoped to walk. Beneath the contested stretch of wall lies the Bogside, where nationalists also rallied in a dangerous game of showmanship which threatened to topple Northern Ireland back into serious violence.

But the mood in the city was oddly relaxed on Saturday morning, as if both sides had stepped back after a week of stormy negotiations, conscious of what was at stake. The Apprentice Boys made a symbolic but peaceful demonstration against what they claim is an attempt by the city's Catholic majority to strip them of their cultural heritage.

During the course of the Troubles, 16,000 of the city's Protestants have decamped and resettled in the Waterside. Today, Londonderry is effectively two cities.

Protestants believe the IRA's campaign of violence in Derry effectively ended some years before the 1994 ceasefire because the republicans had already achieved their goals. However, the parades issue opens up a new front. "It's a continuation of the war without guns by the IRA," said George Glenn, chairman of the Fountain Area Partnership.

Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, did not speak at the Belfast rally on Sunday beyond introducing the main address, delivered by Dodie McGuinness.

Ms McGuinness, who was elected to represent West Belfast in the May elections, concentrated on Sinn Fein's increasing electoral support and the need for a comprehensive settlement of the annual marching season crisis. "We uphold the right of the loyal institutions to march but that does not include the right to march over anyone," she said. "We don't have to like what unionism represents . . . but we do not seek to destroy the heritage or culture of that Protestant community."

Mr Adams later added: "It is not a security problem, it is a political problem. The annual crisis of marches can be resolved if there is a proactive policy by the British government."

He said the decision of the Apprentice Boys' governor, Alistair Simpson, to negotiate with Bogside residents "shows the stupidity and bigotry of David Trimble's position" not to talk to people in the Garvaghy Road, Portadown, during last month's stand-off with the Orange Order at Drumcree.

'Untouchable' quangos paid £60bn a year

Rebecca Smithers

NON-ELECTED quangos account for one-third of all central government spending while the people who run them are an "untouchable" and secretive élite, according to a report last week.

Despite the Conservative Government's pledge to reduce the numbers, powers, and costs of the bodies when it came to power in 1979, the report lists 6,424 executive and advisory quangos which together spent £60.4 billion in 1994-1995 — a 45 per cent increase in their spending in real terms over the last 17 years.

The Untouchables, published by the Democratic Audit and the Scarman Trust, says there are now 5,750 top-tier "executive" quangos in Britain — one for every 10,000 people. Yet the Government recognises only 301 of these in its official "quango count".

It draws the distinction between executive quangos, which are direct instruments of government policy and deal with issues such as education, public housing, and health care, and advisory quangos, which form a "near invisible layer of government".

There are 674 advisory quangos that give advice for ministerial discussion and legislation.

The authors of the report — Wendy Hall and Stuart Weir of Essex university — calculate that there are between 66,000 and 73,500 people who run quangos, nearly all of them appointed by the Government or self-appointing.

Ms Hall said: "The Nolan committee's proposals on vetting members of quangos only scratch at the surface.

"Britain's quangos are among the most secretive and undemocratic in the Western world, and they urgently require reform. The great majority of the public want to make them legally open and accountable. It is time MPs of all parties responded."

Scientists test vaccine to beat cancer

Chris Mihill

CANCER scientists last week said trials of a vaccine that could beat cervical cancer are to start shortly.

Researchers are also looking for commercial backing to test a vaccine that could prevent glandular fever as well as a number of cancers associated with it.

A report from the Cancer Research Campaign says between 10 and 15 per cent of all cancers worldwide are linked to some form of virus, and it is probable that other viruses yet to be identified could trigger other forms of the illness.

Identifying viruses as a cause of cancer opens the way for the development of vaccines, either as a form of treatment to boost the immune system of the cancer victims or, in some cases, to prevent the disease.

Lesley Walker, the campaign's head of information, said five viruses had been definitely linked to cancer and work was under way to find methods of countering these.

Early human trials had started using a vaccine against the HPV virus, which can trigger cervical cancer, and these studies were to be extended later this year.

Dr Walker said the campaign was looking for a commercial partner to test a vaccine it has developed against the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), which causes a range of cancers and also glandular fever.

In Africa, EBV in combination with malaria can produce a cancer of the lymph system in children known as Burkitt's lymphoma. It is also believed to be a trigger for a nasal cancer common in China, and is increasingly being linked to a common form of lymph cancer, Hodgkin's disease.

The virus is also a cause of lymph cancer in patients who have undergone bone marrow or organ transplants, because their immune system is suppressed.

Dr Walker said the vaccine would also stop glandular fever. The virus was carried by most people, and usually held in check by the immune system. Most picked it up as babies where it caused few symptoms, but among teenagers not exposed in infancy, it could trigger glandular fever.



On yer bike . . . Protesters from the anti-car pressure group Reclaim The Streets surround motorists in Trafalgar Square during last week's rally against cuts in public transport. Campaigners brought chaos to London's rush hour to show solidarity with striking Underground drivers PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW TESTA

Redwood call to end Royal Mail's monopoly

Seumas Milne

THE Government's efforts to exploit the postal strikes for political advantage were upstaged last week when the rightwing Tory leadership hopeful John Redwood called for the temporary suspension of the Royal Mail's letter monopoly to be made permanent.

As the postal workers' national programme of one-day strikes resumed and London Underground drivers had a seventh stoppage, Mr Redwood's plea for full deregulation was taken up by the parcels delivery firm White Arrow.

Echoing the views of the other main private courier companies — TNT, UPS and DHL — a spokeswoman for White Arrow said it was "simply not a commercial reality" to take advantage of a temporary letter monopoly suspension, even if the current one month was extended to three.

She said if the monopoly was permanently removed, there was a strong possibility that the firm would "get into letter post in a big way". She refused to comment on what discussions the company had had with government.

Another private delivery service, City Post, claimed to be the first company to have taken advantage of the monopoly suspension, offering a same-day service for existing customers in London during the Communication Workers' Union's fourth 24-hour stoppage in the dispute over working conditions.

The intervention by Mr Redwood threatened to undermine ministers' efforts to embarrass the Labour party over the post and Underground disputes and drew an irritable response from the President of the Board of Trade, Ian Lang, who was forced to warn against the potential threat to the universal price and delivery service from full-scale deregulation. He had earlier dropped broad hints about the likelihood of new Post Office break-up and privatisation proposals featuring in the forthcoming Conservative manifesto.

Post Office managers last week claimed the first significant cracks in their employees' support for industrial action, with 14,000 working on the morning shift — about 15 per cent of those eligible — compared with 11,000 on the last strike day in July. The CWU disputed the figures. Management is sending a copy of last month's rejected agreement to each of the 130,000 delivery and sorting workers.

Meanwhile underground union leaders last week revealed a deal they had offered London Transport, that traded three years of below-inflation pay settlements for a 35-hour week by August 1998.

It was rejected as too expensive by managers, who are also refusing to make a one-hour cut in the working week to 37½ hours that the unions insist was agreed last year.

But this week's eighth tube strike, scheduled for Tuesday, was called off at the last minute as unions agreed to vote on new proposals. The unions decided to recommend the new offer to their drivers. Acceptance of the deal would mean an end to the two-month dispute. There are four more one-day strikes scheduled.

Raise the banner, page 12

Gay rage over 'cures'

THE gay pressure group OutRage last week called on the Department of Health to compensate gay men who had been subjected to aversion therapy to "cure" their homosexuality, *writes Chris Mihill*.

The procedure involved electric shocks or nausea-inducing drugs while patients were shown homoerotic images.

The treatment occurred in the 1960s and 1970s but OutRage said many men were left with lasting psychological damage. The group said that some who underwent the treatment were as young as 14, and at least one man died as a result.

OutRage has written to the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, urging him to set up a inquiry and to establish how many gay men had been harmed by the treatment. It wants compensation for those damaged, and a ban on use of therapies aimed at "curing" homosexuality.

Short attacks Blair's 'men in the dark'

David Hencke

CLARE SHORT, the controversial shadow cabinet minister, last week accused her leader's advisers of jeopardising a Labour victory at the general election and threatening its existence.

"If we don't win, it will be the end of Labour as a party of power at least for a generation, if not for ever," she said in an interview in the New Statesman magazine.

"I think the obsession with the media and the focus groups is making us look as if we want power at any price and that we don't stand for anything. And the people who think Tony has got to look very strong are making him less attractive than he is. This is a very stupid thing to do."

Ms Short, demoted in Mr Blair's shadow cabinet reshuffle last month, said: "He came along as a fresh, young, principled and decent man and some people are trying to turn him into macho man. I know they are doing it because they think it is the way to win, but I think they're making the wrong judgement and they endanger our victory."

Labour was clearly distressed by Ms Short's intervention. Deputy Labour leader John Prescott said: "I am saddened to read what Clare Short has said. I am sure some of her remarks will be blown up out of all proportion. And, as she will agree with me, the Tories remain the real enemy at whom we should be directing all our fire."

Ms Short's attack came a day after a Guardian poll showed the Labour lead ebbing away. Although she named no names, her comments were clearly aimed at Mr Blair's inner advisers, including Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell, who have been accused of briefing against her to journalists. The creation of "focus groups" where selected voters give their opinion to the party has been one of Mr Mandelson's key strategies.

In a swipe at their activities, Ms Short said: "I sometimes call them the people who live in the dark. Everything they do is in hiding."

She added: "These people are making a terrible error. They think that Labour is unelectable, so they want to get something else elected, even though really it is still the Labour party. This is a dangerous game, which assumes people are stupid.

"My life opportunities were brought to me by Labour and what they are now doing is allowing the Tory propaganda version of Labour to be reality. They are saying 'Vote for Tony Blair's New Labour. We all agree the old one was appalling and you all know that most of the people in Labour are really the old ones, but we've got some who are nothing to do with that, vote for us.' One, that is a lie. And two, it's dangerous. I think they are profoundly wrong."

Ms Short described Mr Blair as two people — one likeable figure, the other a Frankenstein creation of the "people in the dark".

"Tony and I had a get-together last night. I had a talk with nice Tony Blair. I really like that one. I think that's the real one." Of the other, the macho, figure, she said: "I think he comes out in the dark."

She also expressed alarm at the way the shadow cabinet conducts business in private. "I've had this experience of some people who are meant to be on my side, one of whom I thought was a really good friend, being dishonest and trying to damage me. If you don't expect it, it's shocking."

Conservative party chairman Brian Mawhinney said of the article: "Clare Short has made it clear that the leadership of the Labour party hate each other and do not trust each other or Mr Blair. She is to be commended for her honesty."

Mr Prescott last week finally won a battle to silence Mr Mandelson. Mr Prescott, in charge of the party while Mr Blair is on holiday, said he, rather than Mr Mandelson, who is head of the media unit, should handle the rift caused by their colleague's criticism.

Mr Prescott conceded that Ms Short's interview had been a gift to the Conservatives. "She is giving a great deal of ammunition to the Tory party and as someone who is concerned to see that the Labour party wins the next election, I can't be happy about that," he told BBC radio.

Mr Prescott was keen, however, to be seen to refute one of Ms Short's points — that Mr Mandelson was too influential in presenting Labour to the media. Mr Mandelson, while continuing to brief, last week seemed to be conceding he must be seen to defer.

Ms Short's interview caught the whole party by surprise. Mr Prescott had to cancel his return to his constituency to respond when he saw a BBC television news report of her attack. A decision was taken later to play down the affair and not to sack Ms Short from her new post.

Later in the week in a move clearly co-ordinated with Mr Blair's office, Ms Short issued a statement echoing Mr Blair's that the interview had been blown out of proportion. "There are no policy differences between us and I strongly support Tony Blair's leadership," she said.

Short shrift . . . party advisers 'endanger our victory'

Blacks and Asians still at social disadvantage

David Brindle

BLACK and Asian people remain disadvantaged on most main social and economic indicators, an official report suggests.

Some groups, notably Indians, are doing relatively well in areas such as education and home ownership, but ethnic minorities generally fare worse than whites on grounds of unemployment, pay, housing, or as crime victims.

The report, Social Focus on Ethnic Minorities, is published by the Office for National Statistics and is a compilation of data mostly in the public domain already. Until recently there was official reluctance to collect statistics broken down by race.

More than 3 million people, just under 6 per cent of the population, are non-white. Only 34 per cent of children of black Caribbean descent are living with a married man and woman, 54 per cent are with a lone mother. By contrast, 90 per cent of children from Asian communities are with a married couple.

Similarly, 83 per cent of Indian households own or are buying their own homes, compared with 36 per cent of Bangladeshi and 40 per cent of black households.

In education, Asian children do better at GCSEs than all other groups, including whites. At age 18, 65 per cent of Indians, 61 per cent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, 72 per cent of other Asians and 50 per cent of blacks are in full-time education, compared with 38 per cent of whites. But, unemployment is far higher among all minorities than among whites.

On pay, average hourly full-time rates are as low as £4.78 for Pakistani/Bangladeshi women, compared with £6.59 for white women, and only £6.87 for Pakistani/Bangladeshi men, against £8.34 for whites.

All minority groups are statistically more likely than whites to be victims of both personal and property crimes. But, the report points out that crime rates are higher in inner city areas, where most blacks and Asians live.

Police not charged over deaths

NO POLICE officer will be charged over the death in custody of Shiji Lapite, a Nigerian asylum seeker whom a jury decided was unlawfully killed, *writes Duncan Campbell*.

Last week's decision came in the same week as it was announced that there would be no prosecution relating to Wayne Douglas, the man whose death in custody sparked the Brixton riots of last December. It also follows a verdict of misadventure by an inquest jury on Brian Douglas (no relation), who died after being struck by a new-style police baton in May last year.

The Crown Prosecution Service said no officer would be prosecuted over the death of Lapite, who died, aged 34, of asphyxiation after being put in a neckhold when arrested on suspicion of possessing drugs in December 1994. His family is said to be considering a private prosecution.

The Metropolitan Police publicly expressed its regret at Brian Douglas's death, the first involving the new baton, and said it would study recommendations on baton use.

Mr Douglas's brother said the verdict was a "gross injustice" and that the family would consider a private prosecution.

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Cover-up on a deadly fall-out

SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS about nuclear accidents on British soil in the 1950s have once again been brushed aside by the Ministry of Defence. This time it can be shown that the MoD is telling whoppers. Last month, it admitted that two Aldermaston scientists had suggested, 35 years ago, that nuclear contamination in the Newbury area was probably caused by a fire in a loaded nuclear bomber — but said the scientists were wrong. More detailed evidence, obtained by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, now shows that the accident — at Greenham Common in August 1957 — was a matter of record and that the nuclear fall-out, in the view of one of the most senior weapons scientists at Aldermaston, betrayed the chemical "signature" of a US bomb. But, the MoD flatly denies the contents of documents whose authenticity it does not, however, dispute.

Two areas of immense concern are raised by these reports and the equivocal, tight-lipped response to them in Whitehall. The first is a straightforward matter of public health. People who live near Aldermaston and Greenham Common, and those living near other civilian or military sites where nuclear material was used or stored around the country, want to know whether they are safe. The high incidence of leukaemia close to the Greenham Common base forms a suspicious "cluster"; it can only be properly investigated if the fullest information on all previous incidents is made available. The Department of Health's own investigation in 1989 was denied access to the evidence — it has now been re-opened. The problem is compounded as former military bases are returned to public use and the risk of exposure is increased.

The MoD has told a palpable untruth in at least one important aspect of this affair. It has consistently denied that any accident "involving damage" to a nuclear weapon has taken place in the UK. Apart from the Greenham Common accident as reported close to the time by the Aldermaston scientists, we now know of at least one other incident: a 2,000lb nuclear weapon was "accidentally jettisoned" from the bomb-bay of a plane at RAF Wittering in 1959, "severe damage resulted to the weapon upon hitting the hard standing". Severe means severe, not a dent or a scratch, which might allow the MoD to shrug off the incident. The information comes directly from the Operations Record Book of the base commander — in a document declassified, perhaps inadvertently, by the MoD itself and obtained by CND from the Public Records Office. Is it now going to say that the base commander, like the Aldermaston scientists, had made a mistake? Only a full disclosure of the facts can allay public concern.

We are also entitled to ask how many other incidents of a deniable nature remain to be exposed. All this will be justified by "national interest", but the argument for Britain becoming a nuclear power was also conducted in secrecy. Greenham Common is not remote history; the safety risk will be with us as long as Britain has nuclear weapons. And how long will that be?

Russia staggers at the start

BORIS YELTSIN is in trouble of all kinds: last week's presidential inauguration provided few clues to the most personal one — his shaky state of health. Was shifting the ceremony from outside in Cathedral Square to inside the Kremlin a cost-cutting measure — or was it really a device to save Mr Yeltsin (who has not been seen in public for six weeks) from more than the minimum effort? If the motive was financial, it can only be a miniscule gesture. Last month, the IMF suspended its latest loan disbursement, citing Moscow's failure to collect taxes. The finance ministry revealed that the federal Russian government has collected only 63 per cent of the planned tax intake for the first half of the year. And the economics minister says that he is considering putting off some of Mr Yeltsin's extravagant campaign promises — for more social spending and support for domestic industry — in an effort to bring down the budget deficit. This is unlikely to help solve the debt cycle, which has already hit a great deal of industry particularly in the defence sector, where the government fails to pay for work done so that the factories cannot pay their debts — or even their workers. The latest headline case concerns a nuclear submarine maintenance plant in the Russian Far East, whose assets have been seized by the local water company and a bank.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of post-election Russia is the calmness with which a grim situation is accepted on all sides. Foreign economic advisers stick to their familiar view that things must get worse before they get better. (Some claim to see signs already of an underlying improvement). Foreign governments try to pretend that Mr Yeltsin's state of health is not deeply disturbing. The mafia-ridden nature of Soviet society is taken for granted, and in some quarters even interpreted as an ugly but inescapable feature of the shift towards a fully marketised economy. Mr Yeltsin's election pledges are acknowledged to have been almost entirely phoney and yet everyone is resigned to the result. The latest bloodshed in Chechenia — where he claimed to be promoting peace — is the most blatant example. Much of the Russian electorate seems to accept the deception, though the Communist Party, now painfully reconstituting itself as the People's Patriotic Union, may offer a chance for second thoughts at the regional elections in the autumn.

None of this necessarily means that we should predict any dramatic upheavals in the near future. Societies have a remarkable capacity for survival under adverse circumstances, and Russia has become used to making the best of the worst. Mr Yeltsin has his own theory on what is needed and has appealed for suggestions on a "national idea to unite all Russians". That is really alarming: the only ideologies around would make things even worse.

Dole and Kemp go for gold

WHEN A CANDIDATE for the US presidential election has lagged as far behind as Bob Dole, he has to resort to desperate measures — like being honest. Asked what impelled him to the 11th hour choice of Jack Kemp as his running mate, he replied with one word: "Winning!" It is a sign of Mr Dole's troubles that the choice of a potential vice-president — a position traditionally not worth that famous bucket of warm spit — has acquired such importance.

At the least, Mr Kemp has given the US media something to tug and tease into shape. He is nothing if not a communicator, though not of the most disciplined kind, and he is never short of a word, though sometimes too long on them. There could be a real problem that he may show up Mr Dole's own rhetorical deficiencies and lack of voter appeal. It may also be hard to avoid the exposure of discrepancies on policy, however firmly Mr Dole has already lectured him on the need to remember that he is only No 2. Yet if he succeeds, he should go further than his boss to fulfilling the promise to take the Republican campaign "to every community and every neighbourhood".

Choosing a running mate who speaks on another wavelength is no novelty: Mr Dole's motive for doing so is transparent too. It is not so much that the two candidates differ on a range of issues where Mr Kemp takes a somewhat (although not always consistently) more liberal view. It is that the more conservative Mr Dole finds himself running a campaign which to potential voters looks even further to the right by many degrees. It is more than a shade humiliating to have to welcome the offer of a truce from Pat Buchanan. Attempts to patch in a few moderate speakers to the convention were offset by the manner in which two influential state governors were warned off from speaking in favour of abortion. Mr Kemp is less of a moderate than he will now be portrayed: he has been described as an arch-conservative who makes conservatives uneasy. But he does call for the empowerment of the poor (through the marketplace), does not slam the unions or denounce affirmative action, and is opposed to cutting down government services for immigrants. In style as well as policy, he can also speak — unlike Mr Dole — to rather than through people.

Mr Dole has called for an Olympic campaign and says he is going for gold. The polls can now be expected to show some improvement in the warm glow of a convention "success". Mr Kemp may win a few medals, but will it be enough?

Raise the banner higher than ever

John Gray argues that in an economic culture of pervasive insecurity, trade unions have a vital role

ARE TRADE UNIONS obsolete? The proposals by Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, are an authentic embodiment of the economic philosophy of the new Right, in which unions are regarded as anachronistic impediments to the efficiency of the labour market.

Lang has proposed ending that long-standing immunity from claims for damages which is granted to unions engaged in lawful public-sector strikes. This immunity has been a fixed point in the legal framework of British industrial relations ever since the Trades Disputes Act of 1906 overturned the House of Lords decision in 1901 to allow the Taff Vale Railway Company to sue the railwaymen's union for damages caused through strikes.

If they are ever enacted, Lang's proposals will return us to the era of the Taff Vale judgment. Unions such as Aslef and the RMT, which are involved in the current rail dispute, will be liable for potentially colossal damages, and subject to sequestration of their assets if they do not, or cannot, pay. In another twist in the New Right ratchet effect, the right to strike will have been effectively removed from 5 million public-sector workers. Britain will enter the new millennium with a *fin-de-siècle* Victorian labour market.

In part, these proposals are merely pre-election gambits, aimed at Tony Blair. They apply the now familiar Tory strategy of confronting the Labour leader with policies that are designed to force him to choose between losing electoral support and risking conflict within his party. The current rash of strikes is undoubtedly a factor favourable to the Conservatives in the deliberations of many voters; but the suggestion of another massive assault on trade unions may actually alienate some wavering Tories. In a time of deep anxiety about job security, union-bashing is not the sure-fire vote-winner it was in the 1980s.

The Tories have not understood that the climate of economic insecurity, in conjunction with the deep changes that the unions themselves have undergone, has wrought a transformation in public attitudes. People who live in fear of losing their jobs are unlikely to regard unions as the chief obstacle to their prosperity. The likelihood of losing an old-fashioned tenured job may not, in fact, have increased as much as people fear; but the consequences of losing such a job are more devastating than they have been for generations.

The widespread perception that if you lose your job you risk losing everything is, in present circumstances, entirely reasonable. This is not an economic environment in which anti-union sentiment can be relied on by the Tories as a source of electoral support for another clutch of New Right policies.

What the electorate is telling the pollsters is that, in an economic culture of pervasive insecurity, trade unions have a vital role. They are valuable intermediary institutions standing between wage-earners and the uncertainties and potential inequity of the free market.

Protecting employees from the worst insecurities of the free market was the original rationale of trade unionism. The unions' role as a defence against insecurity accounted for their strong growth in the 1880s, a period not unlike our own in its enormous economic inequalities and unregulated labour market. Now, as then, trade unions are indispensable defenders of elementary economic rights for millions of people.

This does not mean that the unions can — or should — hope to return to the position they occupied in the 1970s. In European countries such as France and Germany, which have not been subject to a long period of neo-liberal policy, membership of trade unions has nevertheless fallen steeply. Even in Britain, the decline in union membership since the late 1970s from more than half the workforce to around a third probably arises as much from developments in technology, production and world trade as from policies such as privatisation and the outlawing of closed shops.

The shrinkage of mass manufacturing and the growth of leaner modes of production, together with the practices of outsourcing and international transfer of jobs that are made possible by new technologies, all tend to reduce the leverage of trade unions over employers. It is this new economic environment of advancing globalisation, even more than the reforms of the 1980s, that rules out any return to the old unionism.

IF TRADE unions are to protect the economic security of their members in an age of rapid technological change and enhanced global competition, they will need to do more than defend jobs. In collaboration with employers and government, they will need to support a sustained effort to reskill the workforce.

The adversarial industrial culture of Thatcherite capitalism, in which the unions are constantly put on the defensive, has not helped them view firms as enterprises in whose efficiency they have a real stake. Yet the future for the unions cannot be in resistance to change. It must be in enabling their members to cope with it.

What the unions need now is the opposite of Ian Lang's atavistic proposals. They need an accepted framework of law and policy that enables them to develop freely as autonomous institutions. Labour is committed to enacting a minimum wage, joining up to the European Union's Social Chapter and giving unions rights to representation when a majority in the workplace wants it. These commitments are essential if we are to move forward from the neo-Victorian industrial culture that Labour stands to inherit from the Tories.

Will they be an adequate response to the new anxieties of people at work? As globalisation and economic insecurity advance together throughout the world, overturning the free-market consensus and shattering political settlements, how Labour deals with the fears that have transformed public attitudes to the unions may determine its fate in government.

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Bosnia's Croats flaunt their power

Rémy Ourdan in Mostar

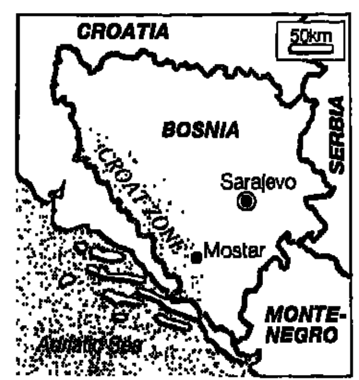
NEITHER the Yugoslavs nor the outside world ever showed much interest in the poor and parched region of Herzegovina, the southwestern part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, until war broke out in the former Yugoslavia five years ago.

Only the town of Mostar could lay any claim to fame, with its Stari Most (Old Bridge), a marvellous example of Ottoman architecture spanning the beautiful Neretva river.

But in the five years that it has been under Croat rule, Herzegovina has sprung to life. Sleepy villages that no one had ever heard of, such as Grude, Siroki Brijeg and Posusje, have played a prominent role in the war. The region has succeeded in building itself up into a power that is able to exert political, military and financial influence on the Zagreb regime. It has also played a key role in the fate of Sarajevo.

With Croatia's backing, the self-proclaimed mini-republic of Herzeg-Bosna became a leading player in the conflict and an important partner in the peace process. It had a great deal in common with the Republica Srpska of the Pale-based ultranationalist Serbs: it grew out of a similar determination to divide the Bosnian communities and open up the way to unification with a neighbouring state.

Herzeg-Bosna pursued a policy of terror and ethnic cleansing. It destroyed cultural identities and shattered the previously untroubled existence of the local population. Symbolic of that policy was the destruction of Mostar's old bridge in November 1993. It set up concentration camps, where Muslims were imprisoned and often executed. Dretel, Gabela and Rodoc are names that conjure up chilling memories of the recent past.





Croatia's President Franjo Tudjman inspects army units in Knin last week. He maintains close links with fellow Croats in the Bosnian region of Herzegovina PHOTOGRAPH: BOZO VUKICEVIC

Serbs, too, were persecuted in Herzegovina and expelled from their homes. Mosques, Orthodox churches and houses occupied by non-Croats were razed to the ground. The Croats' sole failure was in Mostar, where they had to make do with only half the town.

The other weapon available to the Herzegovina Croats was cash. Against all expectations, Herzeg-Bosna has become the richest region in the former Yugoslavia.

Most of its money comes from its system of "customs dues". During the war and even today, the Croats take a cut on all products going into Bosnia. They earn millions of dollars from legal trading, and more from trafficking.

Arms smuggling has always flourished in the region — the Bosnian Muslims had no weapons when the conflict began. The authorities in Herzegovina have also shamelessly "taxed" foreigners and sometimes even humanitarian aid convoys.

Herzeg-Bosna gets additional revenue from Medjugorje, the site of an apparition of the Virgin Mary, which attracts hundreds of thousands of Western pilgrims every year. Souvenir shops there sell not just statuettes of Jesus but badges of the Ustashi, the Croatian pro-Nazi movement of the forties.

This considerable wealth has enabled the Herzegovina authorities to help the Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman, to extend his country's borders at the expense of Bosnia.

They have made extensive contributions to the defence of Croatia and the financing of Tudjman's party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). When the people of Herzegovina were called upon to fight in Slavonia or Krajina, they were willing. And they were always prepared to loosen their purse-strings when money was needed to finance an election campaign in Croatia or to buy arms from abroad.

Herzegovina's financial clout enabled it to place its people in the Zagreb administration. In the defence ministry, Gojko Susak, who was born in Siroki Brijeg, helped Tudjman to draw up the borders of "Greater Croatia". Last November, voters in Herzegovina enabled the HDZ to obtain a majority in the Croatian parliament.

Herzegovina's influence has grown steadily over the years. Many members of the Croatian diaspora who made their money in Australia, Canada or South America hail from the region. The men of Herzeg-Bosna who threw their weight into the war effort and became influential within the HDZ subsequently invested in Croatia.

They have also invested along the Dalmatian coast from Zadar to Dubrovnik. The tourist industry in that area is set to become highly profitable once again.

Those who have observed the close ties between Zagreb and Herzegovina over the past five years sometimes wonder who controls whom. The village of Grude, which the first "president" of Herzeg-Bosna, Mate Boban, chose as his "capital", sometimes appears to play a key role in Zagreb's decision-making.

In 1993, Susak and Boban were often to be seen at Zagreb's Inter-Continental hotel flaunting their power. The financial clout of their region secured them key posts in Tudjman's war cabinet. Diplomats tend to see the republic of Herzeg-Bosna as a mafia-like organisation. But if it contains mafia elements they are perfectly integrated into the republic's military and political structures.

It came as no surprise when Boban, who had been charged with "crimes against humanity" and barred from political activities, was appointed head of major corporations, such as the oil company Ina and Croatia Airlines. Equally predictable have been Tudjman's frequent tributes to the valiant Croats of Herzegovina.

However, the people of Herzegovina are not completely free agents — through the HDZ, Zagreb keeps a tight control on the region's politics. But their main allegiance is to those of their leaders who are based in the Croatian capital, particularly Susak. The long-term aim of Herzeg-Bosna is to be united with its motherland.

Herzegovina's hour of glory struck in August 1995, after centuries of oblivion, when Zagreb reconquered Krajina. The man who stood proudly on Tudjman's right as he kissed the Croatian flag on the heights of the fortress of Knin was Susak. The ceremony was intended as a tribute not only to the army, but also to Herzeg-Bosna.

Tudjman then paraded before enthusiastic crowds in Zagreb. The only man allowed to stand next to him in the presidential car was once again Susak. Tudjman stressed how grateful he was to Susak for his part in the victory of "Greater Croatia".

That day, all the Croats of Herzegovina felt as if they, too, were standing next to the president. Needless to say, they have never been overly enthusiastic about the Muslim-Croat federation.

(August 8)

Scandinavians fear being saddled with Baltics' security

Our correspondent in Stockholm

WHEN he visited the White House on August 6, the Swedish prime minister, Göran Persson, had talks with President Bill Clinton on issues relating to security in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the enlargement of Nato.

Their talks reflected the importance the United States administration attaches to an issue that has far wider implications than the state of bilateral relations with Stockholm, which could not be rosier at the moment. What really interests Washington is the problem of security in countries bordering on the Baltic sea.

The diplomatic moves and countermoves that have been going on between Moscow, Washington and the Europeans in the course of their efforts to hammer out new security structures following the fall of the Berlin Wall entered a more concrete phase after the re-election of President Boris Yeltsin.

The time has now come for the various parties to put their cards on the table, make decisions and envisage concessions so as not to jeopardise the flimsy edifice they are erecting.

In the race to join Nato, which has been mobilising the energies of former Soviet-bloc countries, one or two favourites have begun to edge ahead of the rest of the field. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are expected to form part of the first batch of new members — as early as 1997.

It is a prospect that worries not only the probable runners-up, but also some of their neighbours. The countries that have most to lose from the process are the three Baltic states, which are in danger of being isolated in a grey area on the confines of northern Europe — and under the watchful eye of their Russian neighbour.

That is a scenario Stockholm and Helsinki want at all costs to avoid: they fear that in future they may be landed with responsibilities towards the Baltic states which they are unwilling to shoulder.

Persson made precisely that point in his talks with Clinton, while at the same time outlining the advantages the Baltic states would enjoy by joining the European Union in the near future.

It seems, however, that Washington would welcome an increased commitment by Sweden and Finland on the matter of regional security.

The US will have to make concessions to appease Russia, which regards any enlargement of Nato that includes its immediate neighbours as a threat to Moscow's security.

Official sources in both Stockholm and Helsinki stress that any additional security undertaking on their part is out of the question, particularly because the Balts themselves are against the idea.

At the same time the Clinton administration accepts that some kind of gesture in the direction of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will be necessary — both to reassure them and to deter any possible Russian designs on those republics — if they are left out of a European-wide security deal.

A recent report, thought to be a blueprint for the State Department's new policy on Baltic security, argued that Estonia, which has gone further along the road to reform than its neighbours, should enjoy a status similar to that of Sweden and Finland — that is to say membership of the EU and increased co-operation with Nato within the framework of "partnership for peace".

In one respect, this approach is in line with the policy advocated by Stockholm, which wants to see security strengthened in the Baltic sea region by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joining the EU.

Despite divergences of opinion within the EU, Persson has made this policy one of his hobby-horses since taking over leadership of the Social-Democrat government in March.

The key notion of his policy is "gentle security", a strategy aimed at involving the Balts as closely as possible in a programme of civil co-operation in such areas as nuclear safety, customs and the fight against organised crime. But the Swedish and Finnish governments have stated that they will totally respect the Baltic states' right to decide on their own security and to apply for Nato membership.

Several senior Finnish officials believe that the possibility of Finland joining the alliance — unthinkable only a few years ago — should now be examined. But that has been ruled out by both President Martti Ahtisaari and the Social Democratic prime minister, Paavo Lipponen.

(August 8)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 18 1996

Zapatistas seek to end 'pockets of oblivion'

Catherine Bédarida attends an international conference in Chiapas and, right, talks to the rebel group's leader, Subcomandante Marcos



Marcos and his supporters are trying to end their geographical and political isolation PHOTO: REUTERS

IN THE course of an international meeting against neo-liberalism organised in various Chiapas villages last week, the Zapatista leader, Subcomandante Marcos, claimed that the mountains of southeast Mexico were one of the "pockets of oblivion" to which the neoliberals had consigned human beings whom they regarded as unproductive.

Around 3,000 participants from 42 countries, many of them French, Spanish and Italian, attended the event. They ranged from the Argentine "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" group and representatives of Brazil's Movement of the Landless to Internationale-singing would-be Marxist *guerrilleros* and militants from voluntary and Catholic organisations. For a few days they experienced the life of the Indians at first hand, sharing their meagre rations and having to make do without electricity, telephones or paved roads.

Wooden amphitheatres were specially built in five different villages so that discussions could be held on politics, economics, social issues, culture and ethnic minorities. Using sometimes rather tired arguments, delegates denounced the way that women, indigenous people and the poor were being oppressed and marginalised.

Stalls sold everything from books on liberation theology, brightly coloured Zapatista scarves and Trotskyist magazines to cans of Coca-Cola and snacks wrapped in maize leaves.

At the mountain village of La Realidad, participants set up their hammocks in the midst of wooden houses and mixed with Indian families that rank among the most destitute inhabitants of Mexico.

Contact between foreigners and Maya Indians, who have resisted white domination for centuries, was not easy. Marcos made one or two appearances, but he seemed tired and frail. Although a talented writer, he is a poor speaker.

The hooded Zapatistas present at the debates did not say much. Reporters repeatedly asked to meet members of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), but obtained only a few regimented and unspontaneous interviews. The Zapatista army keeps tight discipline in the villages.

Marcos says the Zapatista movement wants to have a mainly political impact and seek solutions "by peaceful means". The Zapatista cause and its secular approach to the defence of the oppressed clearly struck a chord with foreign activists and visiting personalities, among whom was François Mitterrand's widow, Danielle, filmmaker Pavel Lungin and sociologist Alain Touraine.

But support did not preclude criticism. The authoritarianism of the Zapatista army and its sympathisers, some of whom still have close connections with Marxist hardliners, means it is impossible to predict whether the movement's violent wing or Marcos's more imaginative approach will win through.

For the past two years the Zapatistas have been trying to break out of their geographical and political isolation by holding a succession of national and international conferences. A meeting with trade unions, political parties and voluntary associations took place in June; and an Indian forum was held in Oventic in July.

Negotiations with the government are due to start up again this week.

(August 6)

WHAT IS the aim of the international meeting?

To strengthen international solidarity, but also to get foreigners and Indians to meet each other. The issues we're raising here go beyond the case of our communities. The effects of international financial policies — unemployment and the marginalisation of whole populations — are comparable to those of a new world war.

You have turned down government money earmarked for Chiapas villages under your control. Will you be able to maintain that radical stance for much longer now that neighbouring villages, which support the government, are getting corrugated iron, medicines and a number of amenities?

We were forgotten for so many years that we're used to doing without government help. Before our January 1994 uprising, the government sent nothing to Chiapas and didn't care about the Indian communities. Today, the aim of our resistance is to ensure that life in the Indian communities doesn't revert to what it used to be.

Zapatista women activists have imposed a "revolutionary women's law" which specifies their rights. Why?

Situations vary from one ethnic group to another. But in general women are in a state of greater slavery than men. They hardly go to school. They work a great deal, getting water from the river, gathering wood and working in the fields as well as looking after their children.

The women insurgents in our army are in a stronger position: our struggle enables them to study and take part in political decisions. They are not allowed to become mothers, because conditions in the mountains make it impossible to bring up children.

Yet soldiers still don't like being given orders by women commanders, just as villagers find it hard to accept the participation of women in communal decisions.

Is your movement a guerrilla movement?

No, we define ourselves as a regular army. Decisions are taken by an Indian collective appointed by seven different ethnic groups, including the four main ones in Chiapas. Tactical decisions are the responsibility of the Subcomandante [Marcos].

It's a very peculiar army, which does a lot of talking and little, if any, fighting. Its main weapons are words. It gets better results with words than with military action.

How do you think Mexican political life is going to evolve in the near future?

I don't know if the present political crisis will result in democratisation or, on the contrary, in fascist-style regression. Politics here is a dead end, a victim of its electoral logic, whereas social movements like ours are flourishing. The best scenario would be that such movements will open up the Mexican political arena and bring democracy into people's everyday lives.

(August 6)

End of era nears for Mali's colonial entity

Jean-Pierre Tuquoi in Ségou

THE Office du Niger, a company based in the Malian town of Ségou, encapsulates much of the history of 20th century black Africa. It was set up by the French colonial power in the twenties to exploit land watered by the Niger river, supply France with cotton and, if need be, produce rice that would help eradicate famine in French West Africa. The government appointed a young civil engineer, Emile Bélime, to run the company. He had shown that a huge alluvial plain in French Sudan (present-day Mali) could be irrigated through mere gravitation.

The project required a big dam and 100km of canals to be built. Money was no problem, at least to start with. It was provided by France. Labour was recruited on the spot, and by force. These "volunteers" later became soldiers in the French Colonial Army.

Dramane Diarra, who lives in a village near Ségou, is one of the few surviving witnesses of the gigantic building project. "In 1940 there was a raid on our village," he remembers. "I was 21 and my wife was pregnant. French soldiers rounded up all the young men and told us we had to choose between going to France to fight the Germans or staying here to build the dam." Diarra does not regret the years he spent in forced labour on the Markala dam project. "I'm proud of the dam — before, there were only wild animals and birds round here."

To work the virtually unpopulated and newly irrigated land, the French authorities uprooted several thousand people by force from their native regions in southern Mali and present-day Burkina Faso.

By the end of the war, the Office du Niger, by then one of the biggest companies in West Africa, had a workforce of 6,000 black "settlers" and 200 French expatriates. The 12,000 hectares of land they worked fell far short of the 1 million hectares it had been hoped to bring under cultivation.

Bélime, who had blotted his copybook by collaborating with the Vichy régime, was replaced as director. The Office then became a state within a state. Regardless of whether it made economic sense or not, it increased the area of irrigated land to 40,000 hectares. Cotton, whose yields were only a quarter of those in British Sudan, was replaced by rice. There was mounting unrest among the 35,000 black workers, and France kept on pouring money into the project.

The Office's archives chart the company's decline. A report commissioned by the government from the tax inspectorate in 1956 concluded that the project had been "a failure".

The Office du Niger hardly did any better when it was nationalised following Mali's independence in 1960. The socialist government decided on every aspect of its management, right down to rice and cotton prices and the supply of seeds and fertiliser.

The Office's workforce increased massively, corruption became rife, and output fell to below its pre-independence level although more land had been brought under irrigation. In 1968, Mali changed from being an exporter to an importer of rice. Cotton production was abandoned in 1970 because land elsewhere in southern Mali was better suited to cotton-growing and did not need irrigation.

Lieutenant Moussa Traoré, who brought down Modibo Keita's regime in 1968, was no doctrinaire believer in collectivisation and centralisation — unlike his predecessor. His shift of policy and the introduction of rice varieties used in southeast Asia's "green revolution" enabled the Office to survive. What also helped was the realisation by the international community, after the terrible Sahel drought in 1973, that the Office's land could act as an invaluable safety net for food production.

In 1986, the Netherlands and France helped finance the irrigation system's rehabilitation and the building of a training centre. Rice yields soared to six times their previous level, and soon the Office was unable to husk all its output. Farmers' associations and independent producers bought their first rice mills and the Office's monopoly began to be eroded.

It now has only a few hundred staff and does no more than maintain the irrigation channels. Its four mills, where the cereal is husked, milled and polished, are up for sale. Its heavy equipment stands unused.

Farmers sell their output on the free market; the population of villages in the area has stopped dwindling; and Mali is about to become self-sufficient in rice once again.

There remains one last hurdle: land ownership. The World Bank and other funding agencies want those who work the land to own it rather than the Office. The company's director, Dr Fernand Traoré, thinks it would be a mistake to change the system: "The irrigated land is an investment and belongs to the whole nation. If farmers are given ownership, there is a risk of big estates being built up. Another point is that if a farmer refuses to pay his water bills, we can withdraw his concession. If he owns the land, we will no longer be able to put pressure on him."

Traoré has another argument up his sleeve that now sounds a trifle antiquated in a country that converted to neoliberalism and democracy at the same time: "Rice is a strategic cereal in Mali. If the state were to privatise land, it would deprive itself of an instrument of leverage."

But he cannot win the battle. The funding agencies are determined to ensure a favourable outcome for farmers, even if it takes time. They will then be left with a sizeable cultural problem on their hands: how to persuade farmers to reinvest the money they make in something more worthwhile than cattle, which carry prestige in Mali but are essentially unproductive.

(July 28/29)

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The Washington Post

Releasing Iraq's Oil

EDITORIAL

BY A TYRANT'S logic, it is a victory for Saddam Hussein that he now has broken a key sanction, on oil sales, that the United Nations imposed on Iraq for its aggression against Kuwait in 1990-91. He can claim he has stared down his international adversaries and strengthened his own rule. But he did it only by making his people pay terribly and unnecessarily. He long refused the humanitarian loophole offered by the United Nations, contending its terms for selling oil and bringing in food and emergency supplies impinged on Iraqi sovereignty. And so they did, but for a good reason: Iraq had started and lost a war and proved itself a cheat in peace. Only now, having flaunted his defiance, has Saddam Hussein accepted the terms.

Iraq will be able to resume oil exports at the semiannual rate of $2 billion (half the prewar rate). Some $1.1 billion will go for food and medicines, $600 million for war reparations, up to $300 million for relief of Kurds and up to $100 million for the cost of U.N. operations.

The Security Council gets to review these arrangements every six months on the basis of U.N. monitoring. The United States held up the deal in order to tighten the monitoring and get it down in writing. But of course the devil will be in the enforcement details. The impression is that the sanctions are over. The reality is that a closely watched humanitarian exception is being made.



Power in his hands . . . Saddam Hussein remains a threat to regional peace and stability

General restrictions on normal life remain. Their removal requires Saddam Hussein to halt his clandestine drive to acquire weapons of mass destruction, to ease repression of disfavored groups in the population and to return stolen Kuwaiti military equipment and account for Kuwaiti prisoners and MIAs. Such a turn is not in sight.

Saddam Hussein remains a threat to regional peace and stability, and it is depressing to see him still sitting in Baghdad wielding power. American differences with Iraq's gulf rival Iran have mooted any attempt to mobilize a local balance of power against him. The Iraqi opposition has proven unable to subvert or topple his rule. And now a step is being taken that, for all its humanitarian validity, further reduces prospects of a popular explosion to blow out the regime. The United States is left practicing a containment policy that will have to be sustained indefinitely.

Legal 'Milestone' As Smoker Wins Case

John Schwartz

A FLORIDA circuit court has given a former smoker a "milestone" victory against the tobacco industry.

After two days of deliberations, the Jacksonville jury last week awarded $750,000 to Grady Carter, 66, a retired air traffic controller who started smoking Lucky Strikes in 1947 and sued the cigarette's maker after losing part of a lung to cancer in 1991.

The jury found that cigarettes are unreasonably dangerous and that the company, American Tobacco, had not adequately warned consumers about the risks. The Lucky Strike brand is now owned by Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.

The industry has never paid a penny in damages in a liability suit involving tobacco. But this is the first case in which potentially damaging internal Brown & Williamson documents — which have recently come to light — were presented to a jury.

Brown & Williamson said it was "disappointed" by the verdict and predicted victory on appeal. "The trial was prejudicially tarnished by allowing the jury to receive inadmissible evidence and to hear testimony based on speculation," the company said in a statement. Attorneys for Brown & Williamson argued that smoking was simply one of many risks that Carter had accepted in his life, such as piloting private planes.

Richard Daynard, head of the Tobacco Products Liability Project at Boston's Northeastern University, said that introducing the tobacco industry's own documents was key to the court victory.

One such document, a 1963 memo written by the late Addison Yeaman, then president of Brown & Williamson Tobacco, read, in part, "We are, then, in the business of selling nicotine, an addictive drug."

"It's hard for a jury to look at that stuff and not get angry," Daynard said.

The first batch of thousands of pages of purloined Brown & Williamson documents were first reported in The New York Times in May 1994. The Journal of the American Medical Association published a report on the documents by University of California at San Francisco researcher Stanton Glantz and colleagues in 1995.

However, Patti Stanford, one of Carter's lawyers, said that the documents might not have been the deciding factor in the case, and that the legal climate has changed.

"It's finally the time that they're going to get called" on their claims, Stanford said. The law firm has "hundreds" of similar cases pending, she added, but not all of them involve Brown & Williamson and so the documents may not be admissible in those cases. The American Medical Association applauded what it called a "milestone" case.

In only one other case has a tobacco company been ordered to pay damages to a smoker in a liability case: In 1988, a jury awarded $400,000 in damages to the family of New Jersey smoker Rose Cipollone. That award was later overturned; a federal appeals court in Philadelphia ruled in 1990 that a lower court should not have assumed that Cipollone relied on advertisements touting Liggett Corp. cigarettes' safety.

Smokers also have won cases against Lorillard Tobacco Co. over cancers they attributed to the asbestos in Kent cigarettes' "Micronite" filter, but the Carter and earlier Cipollone cases are the only damage awards for the health effects of tobacco.

Plaintiffs' lawyers have moved away from simple product liability cases in recent years because of the difficulty of convincing juries that smokers did not bring their problems upon themselves, Daynard said. "These were the cases you were not supposed to be able to win." Instead, lawsuits now tend to focus on the addictiveness of tobacco products. Some eliminate smokers from direct participation in the lawsuit at all; a number of states are suing the industry seeking reimbursement for tobacco-related Medicaid expenditures.

Iran Fights Back Against U.S. Sanctions

Jonathan C. Randal in Paris

DESPITE American efforts to isolate and punish Iran with controversial new trade sanctions, Tehran's Islamic regime has expanded its influence with two key Middle East neighbors, diplomats and observers said last week.

Diplomats said the moves appear to be further indications of Iran's burgeoning influence throughout the swath of northern Iraq protected by U.S., British and French warplanes since the end of the Persian Gulf War.

Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's first conservative Islamic prime minister, flew to Tehran at the weekend on his first visit abroad in a gesture calling into question Ankara's central role in Washington's "dual-containment" policy aimed at ostracizing Iran and Iraq.

His trip comes only days after President Clinton signed the sanctions law against Iran and Libya. Despite the new U.S. law's mandatory sanctions against companies conducting more than $40 million worth of annual business with Iran, Turkish Energy Minister Recai Kutan traveled to Tehran last week to discuss possible major purchases of Iranian oil and natural gas.

In a show of strength late last month, several thousand Iranian Revolutionary Guards made an incursion deep into the Kurdish-populated area of northern Iraq, taking advantage of the U.S.-led system of air patrols established in 1991 to prevent Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from renewing his repression of 3.5 million Iraqi Kurds.

Diplomats, Iraqi opposition cadres and regional analysts said they are convinced Iran's purpose was to demonstrate its steadily increasing muscle in the region at U.S. expense.

The incursion provided further evidence Iran has replaced the United States and Turkey as the major player in northern Iraq, diplomats said. The trend emerged two years ago when rival Kurdish factional leaders Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani began a still-unresolved fratricidal power struggle in which as many as 4,000 Kurds have died.

Despite its proclaimed interest in using the Kurdish-populated region of northern Iraq as a staging area to topple Saddam, Washington failed to mediate an end to the Kurdish fighting, apparently fearful of being drawn into a quagmire.

Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party and Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan turned to Tehran. Iran now has a presence throughout the Kurdish region of Iraq, ranging from humanitarian missions to intelligence operations, according to diplomats and analysts.

The recent incursion into Iraq resembled Turkey's repeated cross-border operations in the past four years against bases of Turkish Kurdish insurgents of the Kurdish Workers Party, who have camps in Iran as well.

Such is Iran's power in northern Iraq that diplomats and analysts believe Tehran can provide whatever level of support it chooses to the Kurdish rebels from Turkey. With the Americans apparently opting out of any active mediation in northern Iraq, the Iranians are well positioned to deny Washington a leading role in working toward Saddam's overthrow and influencing his eventual succession, according to diplomats and analysts.

"Iran's message was clear," a regional diplomat remarked. "First, Washington's dual-containment policy has sprung a serious leak. Second, Tehran can influence Turkey. Third, Iran is creating facts on the ground while Clinton talks tough on sanctions . . . but doesn't take decisive actions."

Anti-Terror Bill Stalled

John F. Harris

PRESIDENT Clinton at the weekend accused Republicans in Congress of being a handmaiden for the "gun lobby" because of their refusal to pass a key provision in his proposed anti-terrorism legislation that is opposed by the National Rifle Association.

Republicans have turned aside Clinton's plan to put chemical markers, called taggants, in black and smokeless powders to allow law enforcement authorities to trace the source of the explosive after a bomb goes off. The NRA argues that taggants might make powder unstable.

"The Republicans in Congress could give law enforcement this anti-terrorism tool, but once again they're listening to the gun lobby over law enforcement," Clinton said in his weekly radio address.

While the NRA in recent years has tilted strongly toward Republicans, it was opposition from the more liberal end of the political spectrum that has stalled the other central provision of the anti-terrorism legislation. The American Civil Liberties Union is among the forces opposing Clinton's plan for expanding wiretap authority in terrorism cases.

The administration's bill calls for "roving wiretaps," allowing police to listen in not just on a single line but on all the phones, including cellular phones, used by a suspected terrorist. The law already allows such taps in organized crime cases.

The House passed an anti-terrorism bill before leaving for its August recess, but administration officials said it is flaccid without the taggant and wiretapping provisions. The Senate left town without voting.

Sulking Israeli Minister Boycotts His Job

Barton Gellman in Jerusalem

FOREIGN Minister David Levy, whose four-year feud with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu receded briefly around election day, is doing again what he does better than any rival in Israeli political life: nursing his wounded dignity and threatening to resign.

The second-ranking figure in Netanyahu's government, Levy boycotted the Cabinet meeting last week and maintained an injured silence from his small-town power base of Beit Shean. Through aides in his Gesher Party, which split from Netanyahu's Likud but allied with it for last May's election, he made known that he will quit the post if Netanyahu does not accord him a larger role.

There is no policy or ideological dispute beneath this latest spat, and it cannot threaten Netanyahu's grip on power without stupendous miscalculations by both men. But the drama over Levy's prerogatives and pride has been more than enough to occupy the country's political junkies for several days.

Like many a foreign minister here before him, Levy feels pushed to the margins of his ostensible bailiwick. Neither he nor any senior aide accompanied Netanyahu on his visits to Washington and Amman, and Levy has not even been notified of the secret diplomacy of Dore Gold, a close Netanyahu aide, to several Arab states. When Netanyahu did not bother telling him about secret overtures to Levy's native Morocco, Levy stopped showing up for work and began making rumblings that he would quit.

Much the same tactic has worked often enough for Levy that it could fairly be called the basis of his political career. Resignation threats in recent years landed him the foreign minister's job under former Premier Yitzhak Shamir, forced Shamir and then Netanyahu to tear up their lists of parliamentary candidates to make room for Levy's political machine, and landed him second billing under Netanyahu over figures far more popular in the Likud party and the public at large.

One reason for Levy's success is that his well-developed sense of grievance resonates with others among Israel's large cohort of Sephardic Jews, whose families come from north Africa and the Middle East and who resent the longstanding dominance of European-stock Jews like Netanyahu in Israeli society. The Sephardi vote is essential to the Likud's electoral success.

But Levy has often had a stronger hand to play than he seems to have now. Netanyahu managed to bring him on board for the last three months of the spring election campaign, and without Levy he might well have lost. But as Israel's first directly elected premier, Netanyahu now depends less on coalition partners than his predecessors did to remain in power.

Even if Levy does resign and all six Gesher members of parliament leave the governing coalition — a scenario that still looks remote — Netanyahu would still have a bare majority. He could only lose that if additional Levy sympathizers such as Ariel Sharon, who nurses his own grievances against Netanyahu, were willing to bring the government down and force new elections.

What makes the story irresistible to Israelis, nevertheless, is the obvious personal loathing between Levy, 58, and Netanyahu, 46, who was the silver-haired foreign minister's deputy in the last Likud government and went on to defeat him as party leader. Their bitter struggle for power, which included false charges by Netanyahu that Levy was blackmailing him, left Levy unwilling to speak to Netanyahu — or even utter his name — for some three years. He used to refer to him in public as "that man."

Among Levy's demands at present is that he control the choice of chief negotiator with the Palestinians, a job that remains unfilled.

Netanyahu gave a tart reply in a televised interview last week.

"I was elected in personal elections in order to promote a certain policy, and at the heart of the policy is the Palestinian issue," he said. "I mean to control it in partnership with the foreign minister, but I mean to lead. There is only one prime minister."



David Levy (left) meeting Yasser Arafat last month. The Israeli foreign minister is demanding a larger role, but there is personal loathing between him and the prime minister PHOTO: HAVAKUK LEVISON

Haiti's President Doesn't Just Mark Time

Douglas Farah in Port-au-Prince

PRESIDENT Rene Preval hates to be late. Unlike virtually everything else in Haiti, Cabinet meetings and appointments begin precisely on schedule, and he reprimands those who are late.

Associates say the change from the style of Preval's predecessor and close friend, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, stems not just from a healthy dose of discipline but from Preval's sense that, for Haiti, time is running out.

"Preval does not take himself too seriously, but he is very serious about what he has to do," an economic adviser said. "He knows he has to demonstrate he can deliver the goods. He knows he has to start solving the daily problems of people's lives . . . His back is to the wall."

Indeed, following Aristide, the nation's most popular politician, is a tough act. And it has been made more difficult because Aristide chose not to pay the political costs associated with trying to bring some order out of the chaos.

With 80 percent unemployment, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere has no social safety net. With an illiteracy rate of more than 50 percent, Haiti has few skilled workers. And with virtually no funds for the nation's crumbling roads, electrical system, telephones and health care, most people have little help escaping abject poverty.

Preval, who has little of Aristide's charisma and popular following, was expected to do little more than keep the presidential chair warm until Aristide could run again in 2000.

But in the six months since taking office, Preval has surprised even his friends by seeming to thrive on the job. With crucial foreign aid largely held up by an unruly Parliament's bickering, Preval has focused on accomplishing what he can without outside help and on making the politically unpopular choices that Aristide often avoided.

Although Preval, who served as Aristide's first prime minister, won more than 80 percent of the vote in December 1995, less than 40 percent of the electorate voted. Once so close to Aristide that the two were referred to as "twins," Preval has had to make many of the difficult moves with no public support from Aristide.

"Aristide had the political support to do just about anything, but he refused to move on privatization, on the police, on reining in the excess flow of cash," said a diplomat who worked closely with both men. "Preval, with little support and little to lose, is taking on all those issues with surprising decisiveness."

Preval has heeded Leslie Delatour, the central bank president, by refusing to print money and unleash inflation. Instead, he has let the government spend only what it takes in, day to day.

The policies, and Preval's unflagging pragmatism, have come as a surprise because as prime minister Preval was viewed by outsiders as even more outspoken in support of traditional leftist policies than Aristide, and few expected him to embrace a stringent stabilization plan.

He has angered the nation's tiny elite, which has run most businesses in Haiti as private monopolies for generations, by pushing the privatization law and enforcing tax collection. Proposed privatization of nine state companies could open the economy to competition for the first time in decades, challenging the stranglehold of a handful of powerful families and business groups.

Most of the elite supported the military coup that ousted Aristide in September 1991, just seven months after he took office as the nation's first freely elected president. And most helped pay the Haitian military and assisted it in opposing the U.S. occupation in September 1994 that resulted in the restoration of Aristide.

The state, by simply enforcing the tax code affecting the few with substantial income, increased revenues by more than 30 percent.

"Every day for six months, Preval has been learning about the role of a head of state," said Georges Sassine, president of an association of small- and medium-sized businesses. "Fortunately for us, he does not like adulation. He knows he is weak, but he owes no political favors to anyone. For the first time, he is hitting everyone with taxes."

In an interview last week, Preval showed up on time, wearing a casual shirt and loafers. Aristide was seldom seen in the palace out of a three-piece suit, and his appointments often ran hours behind schedule.

Speaking partly in English and partly through an interpreter, Preval told jokes on himself and said being president was "boring," because people only spoke to him as the president, "not as Rene. We mostly discuss politics, even my friends talk politics, not about our families or children."

Asked what his biggest accomplishment was, Preval said he had "remained true to myself."

"I clearly see where I want to go," Preval said. "I know I can't do everything in five years, so I set myself specific objectives."

Preval said his first and most difficult objective is economic recovery, followed by reforming the police and the judicial system, and decentralizing the state's power in favor of local governments. He spoke forcefully of the need to modernize the state and break the power of the elite families.

For 10 years, he noted, these families have been asking for exceptionally high tariffs on imported goods until their own businesses became more competitive. "In 10 years they have been unable to modernize," Preval said. "Now, for them, it is sudden death.

Children Without A Country

EDITORIAL

IMMIGRANT-BASHING is about to reach a new low this week, as Republicans begin to take up platform language that would deny birthright citizenship to the children of illegal aliens.

The proposal seeks either "a constitutional amendment or constitutionally valid legislation declaring that children born in the United States of parents illegally present are not automatically citizens."

This startling and truly mean proposition would dramatically change not only the constitutional promise of the 14th Amendment, but also a bedrock principle of this democracy: No matter where you come from or who your parents are, if you are born on this soil, you are forever an American.

There are all sorts of practical reasons for rejecting this change.

Would hospitals, for example, have to assume new responsibilities for investigating the citizenship status of new mothers before registering births? Would obtaining a passport require not just a birth certificate, but also a long-deceased parent's green card?

Would the disqualification apply to generation after generation of children because the first immigrant didn't have his papers in order? Would they be eligible for naturalization even though their parents remained in illegal status?

And if discovered, stateless by constitutional amendment, should they be deported — to where? — or should they perhaps imprisoned for the rest of their lives?

We are sure that there are Republicans who have answers for these questions, who could construct a set of rules to their liking and enforce them with enthusiasm. So uncertainty is not a reason for rejecting this platform plank. History is.

Once before, this country denied citizenship to an entire class of native-born Americans, whose ancestors had come from Africa not with visas but listed on bills of sale. A great war was fought over their status in this society, and it was resolved in favor of citizenship and full freedom.

For well over 128 years, every individual born within the boundaries of the United States has started out in life as the political equal of every other child born in the country on that day.

It would be not only destructive, but also incredibly vindictive to take that gift from some on the pretext of saving money or in order to discourage a few desperate pregnant women from sneaking across the border in order that their children be guaranteed a better life.

Any thoughtful Republican ought to be mortified by this kind of language and make every effort to have it removed from the platform.

Rights Group Assails Peru's Anti-Terror Laws

Gabriel Escobar in Lima

AN INTERNATIONAL human rights group condemned Peru's counter-terrorism laws last week and urged President Alberto Fujimori to address immediately the plight of hundreds of people who may have been wrongly convicted.

The report by Human Rights Watch/Americas — which comes just a week after the U.N. Human Rights Committee issued its own rebuke — is one of the most broadly documented denunciations of many aimed at the anti-terrorist legislation since its inception four years ago.

Human rights leaders here credit the international campaign of condemnation — which has involved the U.S. State Department, the Roman Catholic Church and the European Union among many governments and groups — with forcing Fujimori to ease his hard-line stance. Over the last two months, in a marked departure from his prior position, the president has acknowledged that some people have been unjustly detained and sentenced, and he proposed what he calls "a process of rectification."

At issue are repressive counterterrorist measures that created a secretive judicial and penal system to process and punish members of two revolutionary guerrilla groups responsible for a wave of bombings and assassinations that began in 1980 — Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. But with its reliance on "faceless" judges, military tribunals and restrictions on due process — including alleged torture — the system has been the target of continuous criticism by human rights groups both here and abroad.

The principal mitigating measure proposed by Fujimori is creation of a high-level commission that would investigate and perhaps pardon "the innocents" — as the estimated 500 Peruvians said to have been wrongly imprisoned are known here. The commission proposal is one of several made by the government recently; another calls for appointment of a human rights ombudsman.

But the commission would have no effect on the anti-terrorist tribunals, which will continue to operate. And even those who might be pardoned by the panel would still be considered guilty under Peruvian law. "It resolves the problem of their freedom but not the root of the problem, which is that they are innocent," said Francisco Soberon, of Peru's Pro-Human Rights Association.

But like other human rights workers, Soberon said that perhaps the biggest advance on the issue has been Fujimori's acknowledgment that a problem exists. Their hope now is that the government will adopt some of the recommendations in the Human Rights Watch report.

Called "Presumption of Guilt: Human Rights Violations and the Faceless Courts in Peru," the report calls for a review of more than 5,000 cases, abolition of military courts and a restoration of a defendant's basic rights — including the right of the defense to cross-examine prosecution witnesses.

Israelis Lose Zeal for Army Duty

Glenn Frankel in Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon

TIME PASSES slowly for soldiers in a military observation post high atop the portion of southern Lebanon that Israel has occupied since 1982 as a protective "security zone." They spend their days and nights peering through high-powered telescopic lenses at the valley below, looking for signs of hostile Hezbollah guerrillas on the move, alternating tedious duty with snatches of sleep in gray bunkhouses of corrugated sheet metal that bake in summer and freeze in winter.

These soldiers are proud members of the 50th Nahal Battalion, one of Israel's elite combat units. They are among the best-trained, best-equipped and most highly motivated of Israel's young warriors. "We know why we are here," said Chai, 21, a sergeant from southern Israel. "We protect the northern settlements of our country. If we weren't here, they would be in danger."

Still, even in this last outpost in the last Arab-Israeli war, soldiers these days are expressing doubts — not about their mission, but about their future and about the army's place in a changing society. They read headlines about defense budget cuts and talk to friends and relatives back home, and they say they can see that their military service is no longer appreciated quite the way it once was, that it no longer is their ticket to success in the civilian world.

"I see no real benefit for me," said Barak, 21, who hopes to become a photographer when he finishes his service in three months. He and other soldiers here were interviewed under army ground rules that do not allow use of their full names. "When you go for a job interview, it makes no difference where you served. Today the army is just routine. Nobody cares about it."

That is a bit of an exaggeration; military service remains a source of pride and social cachet for many Israelis. But as the young men of the 50th Battalion are finding out, Israel's citizen army is losing its unique place as the central unifying force of this evolving society. Like other governmental institutions, the army has found it is not immune from the country's gradual transformation from a socialistic garrison state under siege to a more open, bourgeois and consumer-oriented society in which individualism is celebrated rather than treated with suspicion.

"There's been a big shift in attitudes among the young," said Itamar Lurie, a Hebrew University psychologist who for six years has surveyed Jerusalem high school students about the army. "Once, the socially desirable response was, 'I want to serve, I want to be a fighter.' Now it has shifted radically, and I see it as a symbol of many important changes in this society."

The Israel Defense Force has long been regarded as one of the country's bedrock institutions. Every Jewish male was required to serve three years following high school graduation and then put in 30 years of annual reserve duty, while most women served two-year stints.

The army gained a reputation for excellence in four successive Arab-Israeli wars, and it provided a melting pot for Israel's varied ethnic groups and cultures, offering education in the Hebrew language and Jewish culture for those who lacked it. Military service became an essential rite of passage.

But the army's image has suffered many blows — from the traumatic 1973 Arab-Israeli War, in which Egyptian and Syrian forces launched a surprise attack, to the abortive 1982 invasion of Lebanon, to the searing divisiveness of that grew out of the army's suppression of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the late 1980s. These reverses stripped the army of the relative immunity from public criticism it once enjoyed.

"It's true that over the past 20 years the army's poor performance has eaten at its status and position," Israeli historian Benny Morris said. "But it has also suffered from the general movement of the country away from ideology over the past decade. Each person wants his own big villa and car. What's important is what's good for the individual, not for the collective."

It is a complex picture. High school boys still sign up for strenuous preparatory courses to compete for hard-to-get slots in elite combat units the same way some students in the United States compete for admission to Ivy League colleges. The army says it still gets eight applicants for every opening in its elite units. But fewer young people in surveys cite patriotism and service to the community as their motivation, while more talk about individual goals.

At the same time, Israeli society has reduced its reliance on the army. Defense spending has steadily declined as a percentage of the gross national product over the past two decades, and more deep cuts are on the way in the budget proposed by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's government. Like many businesses, the army has slimmed down, putting less emphasis on maintaining a large force and more on expensive, high-tech weaponry. Reserve duty is being reduced for noncombat soldiers. There is even talk of what was once the ultimate heresy: turning the army into an all-professional fighting force.

Already, many do not serve. Nearly 18 percent of eligible males are exempted, largely for religious, physical or psychological reasons or because they do not meet minimum standards. According to unofficial estimates, another 15 percent of conscripts drop out along the way — which means that all told, nearly one-third of Israeli males do not complete their three years of service.

One sign of the times is the career of Aviv Geffen, Israel's most popular rock star, who boasts onstage about his avoidance of military service. In the past, such blatant draft-dodging would have been a black mark, but Geffen's career is thriving.

Even in parliament, army service is no longer a prerequisite for success. Due to the large contingent of new immigrants who came as adults and of ultra-Orthodox Jews who can exempt themselves from conscription, by one estimate as many as one-third of the new parliament's members have either done minimal military duty or not served at all.

A 20-YEAR-OLD Jerusalem man who insisted on anonymity told of how he was able to drop out of the army after just 13 months of service. He said he was astonished to find that a quick trip to the army psychologist, where he complained that he was bored and depressed, got him a psychological discharge.

He had started out in a combat unit learning to dismantle mines and other explosives — work that was rigorous and challenging. But after he was transferred to a medical unit, he said, he found the work tedious. Corruption and overstaffing were rife, he said; five people worked in an office where one would have sufficed. Some reported for work only one or two days a week. "It was so much easier on the one hand and so demoralizing on the other," he recalled. "I felt it was a waste of time and I really didn't fit."

In the past, such a young man would have been encouraged by family and friends to stick it out. But he said he saw no lasting stigma for having dropped out and, unless he wants a government security job, no penalty.

But psychologist Lurie says the real test of the new generation will come if the Netanyahu government finds itself in a military confrontation with one of its Arab neighbors. "My own sense," he said, "is that many would not be willing to pay the price."

Tales Cut Short

Gregory Feeley

THE ISLAND OF THE MAPMAKER'S WIFE & OTHER TALES
By Marilyn Sides
Harmony. 277 pp. $23

LAST DAYS OF THE DOG-MEN
By Brad Watson
Norton. 144 pp. $19

SHORT STORIES are read (and finally judged) as individual works, but they come in collections, which possess — if only transiently — their own identities. We still read Hemingway's and Faulkner's stories, but the volumes that the authors assembled — Winner Take Nothing, say, or Doctor Martino — are forgotten, however carefully they were arranged for balance, order of presentation or thematic unity. Yet these considerations were crucial ones when the stories first appeared. A fiction writer may range over numerous subjects and styles, but his story collection — especially the first one — must present a recognizable unity to readers, who are likelier to be intrigued by a distinctive voice than by the promise of variety. Recent successful collections — Mark Richard's The Ice At The Bottom Of The World, Deborah Eisenberg's Transactions In A Foreign Currency, Robert Shacochis's Easy In The Islands — all have distinct identities and probably would have failed without them.

Such coherence may be a support or a straitjacket, which neither reader nor author is likely to know at the time. Both Marilyn Sides's The Island Of The Mapmaker's Wife and Brad Watson's Last Days Of The Dog-Men have conceits that pull the stories closer together, like kids in a family photo. The photo may have been taken to affirm the family bond, but the unsentimental reader may note that some of the kids look more interesting than others.

The characters in Sides's stories are united in their passion for arcane collections: maps, beads, kites, Mayan pottery. Her stories, dense with learning and charged with curiosity, ably convey the intellectual excitement of mapmaking or archaeology and have moreover a kind of ontological fixity: They are engagedly, knottily about something in a way that short stories are not generally asked to be.

In the title story, the map dealer's trip to Amsterdam to pursue a set of exceptional maps culminates in a description of a superlative work by the 17th-century map illuminator Margarethe Blaeu. The map contains an imaginary island off Venezuela that the artist has added by hand: Studied closely, it proves to be a cunning piece of *trompe l'oeil*, with the island's contours forming the silhouette of an embracing couple. It is a lovely conceit, perhaps the best thing in the book, and the fact that Sides is less successful in linking this image with the map dealer's interest in the map's disheveled owner does not detract from its charm.

Sides is, in fact, weaker in her formal construction than in depicting the excitement of her characters' vocations. She sometimes employs dubious tricks, such as withholding her protagonist's name or (as with the map dealer, Descutes) being heavy-handed in its formulation. In three of the four short stories, Sides rings down a conclusion with a burst of figurative language — of smoke and mirrors, really — that leaves the reader uncertain as to what has actually happened.

"The Master of the Pink Glyphs," is a short novel about a bereaved woman who joins an architectural dig in Guatemala and finds self-fulfillment in becoming a skilled drawer of Maya pottery. It attempts, rather daringly, to combine literary showmanship with architectural verisimilitude, with mixed results. The early series of letters between the lovers forces Sides into a rather strained exercise in virtuosity in creating a new pet name for every salutation and signature, since she wishes not to disclose either character's first name. The author is perhaps too much on her protagonist's side — her ingenuousness and dedication are rather glibly contrasted with the smug knowingness of others — and her spiritual regeneration consequently partakes somewhat of the quality of a fairy tale.

Brad Watson's Last Days Of The Dog-Men offers a much narrower aperture: His stories focus on the relations between people and their dogs — hunting dogs, beloved pets, a troublesome stray. Such a high concept sounds like the premise for comedy, and indeed several of Watson's stories are either droll or hilarious. In the title story, after the protagonist's wife discovers his affair, he goes to ground in an especially seedy bachelor household: "The farmhouse is a wreck floating on the edge of a big untended pasture where the only activities are the occasional squadron of flaring birds dropping from sight into the tall grass, and the creation of random geometric paths the nose-down dogs make tracking the birds."

THERE, dogs are used as a gauge of humans' superiority to nature, not necessarily accurately. One of the protagonist's housemates discourses on the qualities that can make a dog "no better than a dog" and not fit to come indoors, but the protagonist yearns for the "order and clarity" of a dog's life. "Humans are aware of very little, it seems to me, the artificial brainy side of life, the worries and bills and the mechanisms of jobs, the doltish psychologies we've placed over our lives like a stencil. A dog keeps his life simple and unadorned. He is who he is, and his only task is to assert this."

None of the other stories works quite so well as this one. In "The Wake" the protagonist must deal with a stray dog that died under his house and is beginning to decay. His problems are compounded when he takes receipt of a crate that proves to contain his estranged wife, who sent herself by UPS from New Orleans in order to have a serious talk. She remains in the box, however, and offers criticisms of him from within as he attempts to entertain dinner guests. This low-affect venture into Frederick Barthelme territory reads crisply but fails finally to resonate: We understand that a parallel is being drawn between the wife and the dog but are not sure what to make of it.

Brad Watson's stories are notable for their verbal energy, Marilyn Sides's stories for their curiosity and engagement with the world. Energy and curiosity are crucial virtues; literary polish can be learned. If neither writer can yet be called fully accomplished, I would nonetheless read more stories by either of them.



ILLUSTRATION: JOHN RYAN

When East Meets Mideast

Shashi Tharoor

OPEN HEART
By A. B. Yehoshua
Translated from the Hebrew by
Dalya Bilu
Doubleday. 498 pp. $24.95

OPEN HEART is the latest novel of the distinguished Israeli writer A.B. Yehoshua, who has won every conceivable literary award in his homeland. In its nearly 500 pages Open Heart provides ample evidence of Yehoshua's command of his metier: The novel flows powerfully in fluent, confident, yet simple prose; it has a compelling story line and vividly drawn characters; and it is infused with a big and serious theme, the nature of love and the mysteries of the human soul.

It is also a novel about two countries, Israel and India — an Israel no foreigner would recognize and an India only a foreigner would recognize. Yehoshua's Israel is a land without terrorism, where no one encounters a Palestinian or discusses politics, and where for 500 pages there is not even a whisper of the existential fear that outsiders imagine to be an inescapable part of the daily reality. This is fine: It helps the author focus on the intensely personal emotions and acts that are the concern of his fiction. His India, however, is where my problem as a reviewer lies.

The story of the novel is simple enough. Benjamin ("Benjy") Rubin, a bright young doctor at a modern private hospital in Tel Aviv, learns at the start of the book that he will not be selected for the surgeon's position he had hoped for. He is instead offered a trip to India with the hospital's administrative director, Lazar, and his wife, Dori, who wish him to help them bring their dangerously ill daughter, Einat, back to Israel. In the course of the trip, the young doctor observes the suffocating intensity of the dependence and affection that bind the older couple to each other. He then falls impossibly in love with the "overweight, middle-aged" Dori.

On their return to Israel with the now restored Einat, Benjy pursues his passion by renting an apartment from Dori. Almost to protect his illicit love, he marries Michaela, an intense young woman who had befriended Einat in India. As the novel unfolds over the next two years, Yehoshua candidly explores each of Benjy's relationships — with Lazar, whose patronage he needs and whose wife he loves; with Dori, for whom his lust is overpowering, with Michaela and their daughter, Shiva, whose name is simultaneously that of the Hindu god of destruction and the Hebrew word for "return," and with his parents and colleagues.

Yehoshua is a writer with a remarkable command of the emotional and practical details of which life is made, and under his omniscient gaze each character, each relationship is both delicately and deeply etched. Open Heart is an astonishing work about love in all its forms.

Unfortunately, that is not all it seeks to be. With India as its platform and backdrop, the novel also seeks to explore the nature of the human soul; its characters are constantly debating whether souls exist and whether they can migrate into other bodies, a possibility for which death is apparently not always a prior requirement.

But it is hard to accept the authorial confusion that has the Buddhist Michaela declare that "there's no such thing as a soul" and then be enthralled when her husband claims to be possessed by another's ("an ethereal idea from the India she so adored and longed for").

There comes the question of the reviewer's subjectivity: Would this matter to a non-Indian reader? My problem is that Yehoshua's accomplishment as a psychological novelist is diminished in my eyes by his despoliation of the integrity of a foreign culture. There is a crucial blood transfusion early in the novel which provides for me a damning metaphor — for Yehoshua seems to have drawn just enough blood from India to serve his fictional purposes, in a procedure that is hurtful to the donor and arguably unnecessary for the recipient. In this exploitative process, the emotional structures and imaginative impact of the novel are, for me, fatally undermined.

I can only hope that others less troubled by this will find greater satisfaction in what is, despite this flaw, a considerable work of art.

Finding a Way Towards Peace in Belfast

Peter Finn

THE TROUBLES
Ireland's Ordeal 1966-1996 and
The Search for Peace
By Tim Pat Coogan
Roberts Rinehart. 472 pp. $29.95

IT IS difficult, in the middle of the Irish Republican Army's heinous bombing campaign and the thuggery of the Protestant Orange Order in Catholic neighborhoods, to look back with dispassion at the slow, tortuous road to an Irish cease-fire and its failure. The silencing of the guns created a rare moment in Irish history when reconciliation might have rooted in the stony ground of sectarian hatred. The period ended in February when an IRA bomb at Canary Wharf in London all but devastated the fragile — and in Ireland always treacherous — politics of compromise.

However difficult, though, an accounting of rank political failures during the 17-month cease-fire is necessary. In Tim Pat Coogan's account, the primary political failure lies with the British government. Writing with a clear nationalist perspective, Coogan, a leading Irish journalist and historian, despairs of the British failure to move quickly to all-party talks, which foundered on the issue of when and how the IRA should disarm.

Neither the British government nor the Protestant Unionist community can be expected to negotiate with an IRA that will not disarm until there has been an end to negotiations. Similarly, the IRA cannot be expected to immediately disarm in advance of any negotiations because this can only be read as surrender. Between those two positions, the British government did not establish a middle ground.

In the end, elements within the IRA saw only sophistry and retreated from the path that the leadership of its political wing, Sinn Fein, was trying to clear. Whether the British government, given the bombings, can surmount its understandable loathing for the IRA, even if there is another cease-fire, is unknowable. And The Troubles, most of which was written before the first bomb exploded, ends just as these questions become critical.

Much of Coogan's book, unfortunately, is taken up with recounting the long history of the conflict, a story already well-told elsewhere, and without the tone of nationalist grievance too evident here.

Still, when he finally gets around to it, Coogan provides a worthy account of the guarded, nuanced evolution in Sinn Fein's thinking, away from its blind belief that Britain, not the Unionist community, was the obstacle to a United Ireland and toward a realization that political structures may evolve from negotiations that fall short of the old dream of unity.

Whether the Unionist community can believe that the peace process is not a Trojan Horse and accept something other than an internal solution remains an untested proposition. There has to be a return to negotiations. And there is no sense in Coogan's book how far Unionists might travel to new structures, short of a United Ireland.

That, in fact, is the great weakness in Coogan's book. He has little or no sympathy for Unionist sensitivities or fears. His sources do almost nothing to help him develop a sense of their thinking behind the predictable public posturing.

Coogan, writing an epilogue in early 1996, remains optimistic, perhaps unduly so given recent events. He says the logjam can be broken only by President Clinton. But the logjam, while not entirely of its creation, is the IRA's to break, by restoring the cease-fire and committing to a reasonable disarmament process. Such a move will have to be followed, quickly this time, by a determined British effort to include Sinn Fein in talks and outlast the probable obduracy of loyalists. Maybe then, in the words of the poet Seamus Heaney, hope and history can rhyme.

Too much democracy can be bad for you

Richard Thomas

WHEN East Germans tore down the Berlin Wall in 1989, a new global truth seemed to have been established: democracy and economic prosperity are two sides of the same coin.

Sure, the demonstrators who washed away the communist regimes of eastern Europe wanted democracy. But they wanted it, at least in part, because they hoped Big Macs, denim and Nike trainers would follow in its wake. The world's most successful economies were also democracies.

But this year, virtually unnoticed, nations west of the old wall have been ditching this apparently cast-iron rule. Last week, Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Belgian prime minister, assumed executive power to raise taxes, cut benefits and set wage levels without prior consultation.

The reason for the emergency measures is that Belgium is way outside the Maastricht criteria for joining a single currency — and desperately wants to be in the club. Even those who warned that the European Monetary Union project would erode national democratic rights cannot have imagined such an early reverse.

Last spring, the Italians — who also want to be in the European core — held elections in which the proportional element was diluted. The resulting Olive Tree Alliance is enforcing collective cabinet responsibility for the first time in living memory. Last week saw monthly inflation fall for the first time in 25 years.

A new truth is emerging: too much democracy makes for bad economics. Politicians and economists are reluctant to come clean about this. In the Western political lexicon, motherhood and apple pie rank way below democracy.

But there is mounting evidence that political freedoms do, at some point, compromise economic progress. In an article for the new Journal of Economic Growth*, Harvard economist Robert Barro concludes that economic growth rates are negatively associated, albeit weakly, with greater democracy.

Surveying 100 countries between 1960 and 1990, he shows that while economic freedoms — free markets, rule of law, strong property rights and limited corruption — are powerful determinants of growth rates, political freedoms appear to have the opposite effect. Although some democracy is better than none, lots of democracy — more frequent votes, at more levels, on more issues — is worse than some.

There are two reasons why this is so. First, voters want to feel good now, not tomorrow. Even if at some level we know a recession is necessary, we would rather put it off. And because politicians know this, the economy is run in line with our short-term, greedy wishes.

This is the argument that underpins calls for independent central banks. Because politicians will be under pressure to deliver short-run growth, they neglect inflation — and rising inflation puts the brakes on longer-term expansion.

Of course, those who want to take monetary policy out of the hands of elected politicians never dare to frame their arguments like this.

Professor William Keech, whose latest book** was a precursor to Mr Barro's research, supports independence for central banks. He denies his stance is undemocratic. "Democracy covers a wide constellation of forms, in which electorates play a meaningful role," he says.

This is hokum. Democracy does take many forms. But the starting point of any definition is the capacity of a universal electorate to throw out those they believe to have fouled up. We can do this to politicians who decide monetary policy. We can't do it to unelected central bankers. Independent central banks are less democratic. QED.

The real point that proponents of central bank independence make is that the loss of some democracy is worth it, because of the improvement in economic prospects.

There is no shame in making this choice, so long as it is clear and not befuddled by arguments about different shapes of democracy. People can choose to give up some of their democratic power in exchange for something else. The Bundesbank, probably the least accountable central bank in the world, is wholeheartedly supported by a population among whom the scars of pre-war hyper-inflation still run deep.

Too much democracy votes to mess things up. But there is another reason why Mr Barro found a perverse relationship between democracy and growth: purer forms of democracy allow politicians mess things up. Countries with constitutional structures that disperse power between legislatures, between central, local and regional government, and between parties have a poor economic record, the research by Mr Barro and Prof Keech suggests. Hence Italy's retreat from pure proportionality, and Belgium's U-turn.

Tough, unpopular decisions are harder to make when the support of a number of players is needed. As Prof Keech says: "It is impossible, by definition, for lots of people to bite a bullet at the same time."

By contrast, the "Westminster" style of democracy — with first-past-the-post elections and strong central executive control, seems to be associated with a better long-run economic performance. One reason the UK probably doesn't need an independent central bank is that it is a less democratic country in the first place — the insulation is built into the system.

The implications for British politics are painfully clear. There is an empirically proven trade-off between democracy and prosperity in industrialised countries. And, given the choice, most voters would almost certainly go for faster growth, not a bit more democracy.

Tony Blair has already watered down some of Labour's plans for devolution — and looks to be cooling on PR. If he is serious about shifting the economy on to a high-skill, high-investment path, this is a good sign. He will have to keep the levers of power within his own reach — even if that goes against his democratic instincts. Labour is into tough choices: here is a beauty.

* Kluwer Academic Publishers, 101 Philip Drive, MA 01061, US.
** Economic Politics, CUP.



Buying back is no investment

Heather Connon looks at how a sign of management failure has become a symbol of corporate virility in the short-sighted City

FORGET mega-takeovers, trophy headquarters or fleets of jets; the latest symbol of corporate virility is the share buy-back. It has become the vogue for companies to shrink capital bases rather than expand corporate empires.

Already this year more than $3.4 billion worth of shares has been bought back by companies ranging from RJB Mining to NatWest, which recently chipped in with $699 million. That is already more than the $3 billion total in 1995 and Kleinwort Benson estimates buy-backs for the year could reach $5.4 billion as mature industries such as banking, financial services and retailing start to throw off surplus cash.

The City loves it. What was once dismissed as a sign of management failure is now celebrated as a symbol of great success, and any company whose balance sheet even hints at surplus cash is urged to join the trend. Companies extol earnings per share, dividend potential and cost of capital. Investors — many of whom can reclaim a tax credit on the shares they sell, boosting their proceeds by a quarter — rub their hands in glee.

"If companies are buying back their own shares, at least they are investing in something they should know a bit about," said David Rough, investment director of Legal & General.

But what about the effect on corporate Britain? Handing cash back to shareholders does nothing to improve the economy. Surely it would be better to invest in building for the future — and, given Britain's rather poor record of investment, any additional funds would be gratefully received. Companies that buy back their shares insist they are investing, too, it's just there are not enough projects available with the required rate of return.

The best example of that is Reuters, which started the buy-out trend with a $544 million repurchase in 1993 and is considering a similar move this year. It is spending heavily — in 1995 more than $775 million on research, capital investment and acquisitions — though it managed to increase its cash balances by more than $465 million, to $1.3 billion.

Barclays, one of the leading proponents of buy-backs, was expected to do its third following interim results last week. But it has a slightly different reason. Chief executive Martin Taylor is determined that the bank be disciplined in its use of capital. Even the blunt Mr Taylor is too polite to say so directly, but he wants to avoid a repeat of the 1980s disaster, where a $1.4 billion rights issue in 1988 was splurged on property lending, leading to a $375 million loss and a slashed dividend in 1992.

That is a graphic example of one of the problems with capital investment: companies are not very good at it. Legal & General's Mr Rough blames management for setting too-high targets. "Companies aim for 25 or 30 per cent returns, then identify four projects which can achieve that. In fact, if they are lucky one achieves 20 per cent and the others fail, so the overall return is something like 9 per cent. But if they set a more reasonable rate of return, say 12 or 13 per cent, they could choose more projects which would be more likely to succeed. The overall return to the business could be that much greater."

Paul Temple of the London Business School, who is carrying out work on competitiveness with his Warwick colleague Simon Peck, says too much of Britain's investment is aimed at cutting costs and lowering prices, rather than for technological edge or long-term benefits. That means it gets far less benefit from investment than countries such as Japan and the US.

Why companies set themselves such high investment hurdles is not clear. Mr Rough believes it may be that projects have failed so often managements feel they have to compensate. As likely, however, is that it is a reaction to the boom-to-bust history of the British economy, exacerbated by the short-term nature of most directors' remuneration contracts.

Certainly there is little sign companies are reducing their target rates of return to take account of the more stable growth and lower inflation both the Government and the Opposition say will continue. That is partly because managers have long memories; they need more than a few years of stability to be persuaded that British policy-makers have changed their spots. Real interest rates, adjusted for inflation, remain alarmingly high.

Even so-called long-term incentive plans can cover only a three-year period and will be geared to increases in earnings and share prices — both of which are far more easily influenced by short-term fixes than long-term investment.

Professor Peter Moizer of Leeds University business school says his research shows the only thing companies cling to consistently is their dividend payments. He found that companies, and institutional investors believe they are being assessed mainly for short-term results. Fund managers' investment performance is monitored quarterly, and they tend to prefer companies that produce consistent results.

Company managements are judged by daily share-price movements, or half-yearly profits performance, giving them a disincentive to take risks.

"That adds to the attraction of acquisitions," said Mr Moizer. "If you have to set up a factory somewhere, it could take at least five years before it starts to produce any return."

Acquisitions, on the other hand, give instant results. Cost-cutting from integrating head offices, closing factories and shedding employees are quickly translated into higher profits, so who cares about strategic fit and long-term growth?

Take last week's $206 million purchase of the Pelican restaurant chain by Whitbread. Pelican's founders, with far less financial muscle than Whitbread, managed to assemble 100 restaurants from a standing start just over six years ago. Instead of building a chain itself, Whitbread opted to buy Pelican, paying $155 million more than Pelican has invested in the assets. — *The Observer*

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates August 12.	Sterling rates August 5
Australia	1.9954-1.9979	1.9959-1.9984
Austria	16.10-16.11	16.10-16.13
Belgium	47.16-47.25	47.16-47.26
Canada	2.1270-2.1291	2.1224-2.1254
Denmark	8.85-8.88	8.84-8.86
France	7.83-7.83	7.77-7.79
Germany	2.2883-2.2907	2.2888-2.2919
Hong Kong	12.00-12.01	11.93-11.04
Ireland	0.9614-0.9627	0.9588-0.9606
Italy	2,350-2,353	2,339-2,343
Japan	166.84-167.05	164.52-164.79
Netherlands	2.5680-2.5706	2.5673-2.5706
New Zealand	2.2589-2.2626	2.2578-2.2615
Norway	9.91-9.93	9.88-9.90
Portugal	235.38-235.70	234.06-235.57
Spain	194.96-195.26	194.37-194.67
Sweden	10.31-10.33	10.19-10.21
Switzerland	1.8606-1.8633	1.8556-1.8584
USA	1.5514-1.5524	1.5436-1.5448
ECU	1.2201-1.2214	N/A-N/A

FTSE-100 Share Index up 16.6 at 3802.8. FTSE 250 Index up 44.5 at 4331.8. Gold down $2.50 at $387.85.

The University of Auckland

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Vacancy UAC.765

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Lectureship in Japanese Politics & International Relations

Vacancy UAC.767

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Conditions & Procedures for All Vacancies

Further information and Conditions of Appointment should be obtained from the Appointments Department, Association of Commonwealth Universities, 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF (tel. 0171 387 8572 ext. 206; fax 0171 813 3055; email: appts@acu.ac.uk); or from the Academic Appointments Office, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand (tel. [64 9] 373 7599 Extn. 5790; fax [64 9] 373 7023; Email: appointments@auckland.ac.nz). Information may also be found on http://www.auckland.ac.nz/pol/dept.htm. Three copies of applications must reach the Registrar by 18 September 1996.

Please quote Vacancy Number in all correspondence

W B NICOLL, REGISTRAR



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Community Development Programme Co-ordinator

Mozambique

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This is a one year contract which can be renewed. For an information pack and details of how to apply please telephone Myviet Chu on +44 171 253 0253 or fax her your CV on +44 171 253 0396. Closing date: 9th September 1996.



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274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.
Please quote ref: OS/PC/CUB/AD/GW.
Closing date : 13 September 1996.
Interview date: TBA.

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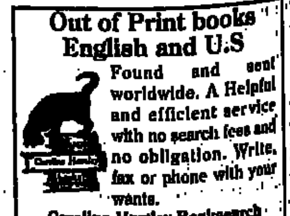
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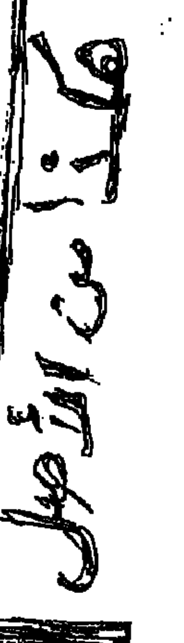
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- Salary by negotiation

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Closing date for applications is 6th September 1996.

Please send full C.V., covering letter and contact telephone number to:

David Campbell, Executive Director, FARM-Africa
9-10 Southampton Place, London WC1A 2EA
Fax: 0171 430 0460

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PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR

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- A knowledge of land issues in the sub-region and how these relate to similar issues in Canada would be an advantage
- Knowledge of fundraising principles and practices and demonstrated experience
- Excellent communication skills. Effective communication in English and Portuguese is required; a knowledge of Swahili would be an advantage
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- Experience of working with co-operants/volunteers overseas
- Willingness to travel throughout the region

Qualified candidates should submit their curriculum vitae, names and addresses of 3 referees, photocopies of certificates and a short statement on how they see themselves contributing to the work to the Administrative Assistant at **P.O. Box 9070, Airport, Accra, Ghana or by fax to (233)21 772948 by 2 September, 1996**.

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The post(s) is/are tenable from November 1996 (or as soon as possible thereafter) and the salary (inclusive of London Weighting) is expected to be within the Grade A Lectureship scale (£17,288 - £21,982 p.a.) although appointment on the Grade B scale (£22,811 - £28,564 p.a) is not excluded in an exceptional case. Applications (6 copies from UK applicants, 2 from overseas applicants) with full c.v., list of publications and the names of three referees should be submitted not later than 28 August 1996 to the Director, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY (tel: 0171-380 7483, fax 0171-383 2572) from whom further particulars can be obtained.

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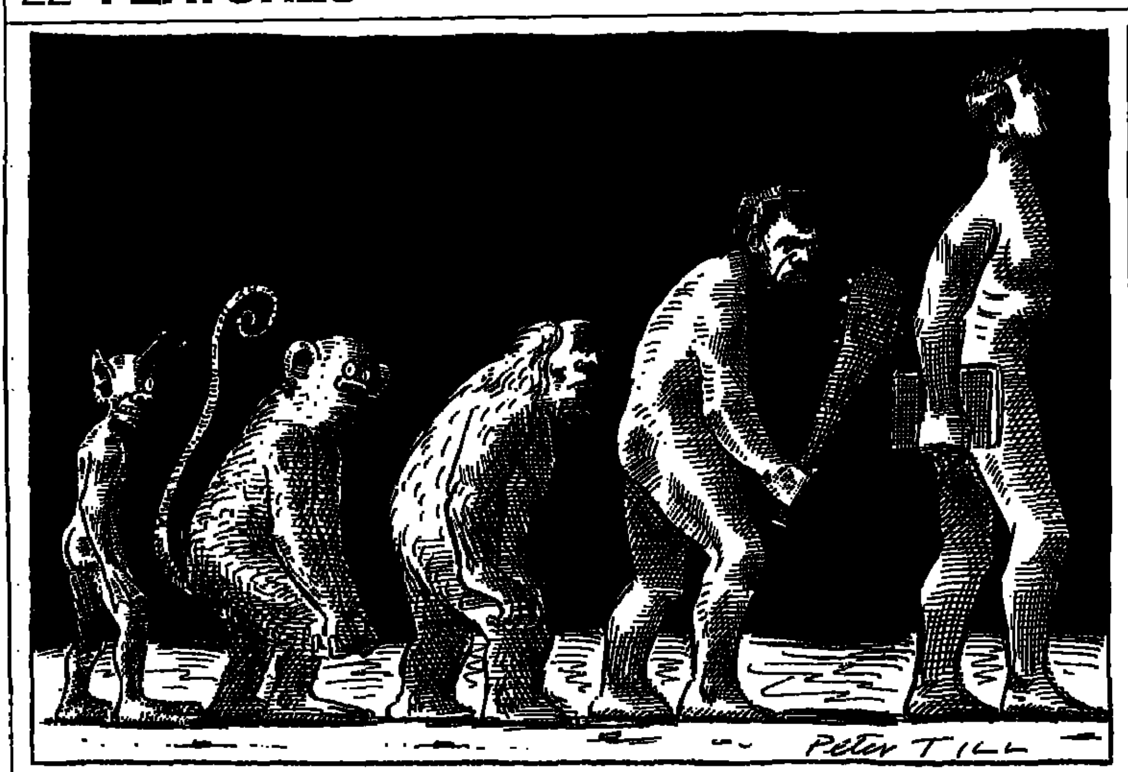
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For further details please contact Pat Moseley, The Ockenden Venture, Constitution Hill, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7UU. Tel: 01483 772012. Fax No. 01483 750774.

Closing date for applications: 30th August 1996.

Charity No. 1053720



Return ticket to Mars

Paul Davies argues that since planets have been hurling rocks at each other for aeons, life on Mars could have come from Earth. Or vice versa

NASA'S announcement of evidence for Martian micro-fossils signals a dramatic U-turn in scientific opinion about the Red Planet. Twenty years ago scientists had all but written off Mars as an abode for life after the Viking Lander missions. Samples of Martian topsoil scooped up by the Viking craft showed no convincing signs of organic activity. Moreover, the surface temperature and atmospheric pressure were dismally low. In short, Mars seemed a sterile, forbidding planet.

Now scientists are questioning this conclusion. Several Mars experts have for some time been expressing cautious optimism that Mars may once have harboured life. Some have even suggested that Martian microbes may still survive, deep beneath the surface.

One reason for this change of heart was the discovery of life in some unusual places on Earth. In the late 1970s biologists were amazed to find organisms living on the ocean floor, several kilometres down, close to volcanic vents. Here there is no sunlight, and the temperatures can be well above 100C. The fluids erupting from the vents are richly laced with sulphurous and other chemicals that would kill most familiar organisms. Yet there are microbes — thermophiles — that thrive in these conditions.

Thermophiles are independent of the food and energy chain that sustains surface life. Instead, they make a living from the hot chemical broth that vomits from the vents. This prolific source of energy supports an entire ecology that includes crabs and tube-worms several metres long.

The deep-ocean thermophiles, along with their microbial cousins living in the boiling geysers of Yellowstone National Park, are no evolutionary quirks. Indeed, there could be thousands of species of these microbes. They are so weird that they form their own kingdom of life, called archaea. Many biologists think the archaea closely resemble Earth's earliest living organisms.

But this is not all. Deep drilling projects in the ocean floor have shown traces of microbes in the crust of Earth itself. Evidence is accumulating of an underworld of exotic life-forms, with microbes teeming in the hot rocks beneath our feet.

The importance of this discovery for Mars is that similar conditions are likely to have prevailed beneath the Martian surface, too, during its 4.5-billion-year history. Photographs show ancient river systems on Mars, including huge canyons and deltas cut by running water. Geologists suspect that massive flash floods were caused by volcanoes melting underground ice deposits. The combination of volcanic activity and water could have created a perfect environment for Martian thermophiles.

But suitable conditions are one thing, the actual emergence of life quite another. Biologists still have scant idea how life began. Darwin suggested it started in a "warm little pond" on Earth's surface. The favoured theory is that chemical self-organisation occurred in a soup of organic compounds, creating molecules of greater and greater complexity, until the first truly self-replicating molecule was produced.

The trouble is, nobody knows how long this prebiotic phase lasted, or whether the first organism formed on Earth's surface, in the hot underworld, or somewhere else entirely. Also, scientists are sharply divided over whether the formation of life was a completely freak occurrence, unique in the universe, or a more or less inevitable result given the right conditions.

Even if life on Earth is a squillion-to-one freak occurrence, we cannot rule out life on Mars. Over the last decade or so, geologists have become convinced that a handful of meteorites found on Earth originated on Mars. In fact, a fragment of one has been in the possession of the University of Adelaide for years. The meteorite in the news, containing possible micro-fossils, was recovered in 1986 from the Antarctic ice sheet.

It may seem baffling that chunks of Mars are found right here on Earth. How do they get here? The answer is simple. Every few million years Mars gets slammed by an asteroid or comet with enough force to blast rocks into space. You can see the craters clearly in satellite photos, peppering the Martian landscape. Over the aeons the ejected fragments become strewn around the solar system. Some inevitably get swept up by other planets as they orbit the Sun. It has been estimated that 500kg of Martian material strikes Earth every year. The same process is bound to happen in reverse: big impacts with Earth eject debris into space, some of which will reach Mars. So it seems as if rocky material is continually being exchanged between the planets.

During the first billion years of their 4.5-billion-year history, the planets would have been subjected to a much more intense cosmic bombardment. Rocks and boulders must have travelled in profusion between Earth and Mars.

The significance of this discovery for life on Mars is obvious. If Earth's rocks harbour micro-organisms, then material displaced into space by impacts could convey live microbes to the Red Planet, whereupon they may emerge and colonise their new home. Cocooned in a rock, a microbe would be shielded from the ultra-violet and cosmic radiation of outer space. In spore-like form, it might remain viable almost indefinitely. To reach Mars alive, microbes must survive their projection from Earth and the heat and shock of entry into the Martian atmosphere.

Jay Mellosh of the University of Arizona suggests that considerable quantities of rocks ejected by a major impact would in fact remain relatively unscathed. Moreover, a reasonable fraction of rocks that strike the Martian atmosphere at a glancing angle would slow and explode, spilling their microbial cargo gently to the ground. Today, any space-faring bugs would encounter harsh and probably lethal conditions on Mars. But in the past, when conditions were more favourable, they might have felt at home.

My conclusion, first presented at a series of lectures in Italy in 1993, and described in my book Are We Alone?, is that Earth and Mars may well have cross-fertilised each other. During the first billion years, when microbial life began to establish itself on Earth, this interplanetary contamination might have been common.

The new evidence presented by Nasa strongly supports this theory. If a fossil microbe can reach Earth from Mars, it is likely that a live microbe can do so too. If so, it would be hard to tell whether life originated on Earth or Mars, or on both independently. It may turn out that Mars was the more favourable location. In which case we would all be descended from Martians.

Paul Davies is Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Adelaide

Father of the jet age

Sir Frank Whittle

SIR FRANK WHITTLE, who has died of lung cancer aged 89, was an engineering genius frustrated by official disinterest and political manipulation, yet finally triumphant. He is known throughout the world as the inventor of the turbojet engine, which he patented in 1930; as the pioneer of high-flow compressors; and as the holder of first patents on the later turbofan and bypass jet engines. Whittle-based engines transformed aviation and have powered all major aircraft since the fifties.

From 1929 he had been expounding the potential of the turbojet in high-speed and high-altitude flight. The Air Ministry listened without enthusiasm, repeatedly declaring that although in theory the jet engine was sound, the required high-temperature alloys were not available and, for practical purposes, the idea was largely pie in the sky. There was neither government nor industrial interest in Whittle's 1930 patent and, until 1936, no financial support for development.

Whittle, by this time on a post-graduate fellowship at Peterhouse, was close to despair. Out of the blue, two retired RAF pilots, R D Williams and J C B Tinling, plus M L Bramson — a pilot-engineer with connections to the investment firm Falk and Partners — offered to join forces in a development company with Whittle at its head. Bramson produced an enthusiastic report, and an agreement proposing the establishment of Power Jets Ltd on private capital was sent to the Air Ministry.


The power and the glory . . . Sir Frank Whittle inside the intake of a Rolls-Royce engine. To his despair he was told to hand over his life's work to the company by the Air Ministry PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN REARDON

There was no offer of financial help from the ministry. Nevertheless, encouraged by his Cambridge tutor, Professor Roy Lubbock, and by the head of aeronautical sciences, Melville Jones, Whittle launched the company on a shoestring.

Not until 1939, with Whittle's third experimental engine showing substantial technical promise, did the Air Ministry step in with a contract allowing Whittle to head Power Jets Ltd and develop a prototype engine for the RAF. The result was the famous W.1 flight engine, designed into the single-seat experimental fighter aircraft E28/39.

With jet engines obviously heading for success, the Air Ministry came under heavy pressure from the British aircraft industry — which hitherto had done nothing to help — to take over future production from Whittle. In spite of having several contracts for engine production in hand, Power Jets Ltd was ordered to hand over all production work to the established aero engine industry.

Whittle argued that they were ill-prepared for an entirely new technology. Later delays showed he was right but his plea was in vain and Power Jets Ltd was restricted to research work. Whittle resigned and his health broke down. His life's work became the property, under Crown use, of Rolls-Royce and Armstrong-Siddeley in Britain, and the major manufacturers of the United States. Whittle's role became that of consultant. That he was later awarded £100,000 in compensation, a large sum in the forties, seems an inadequate recompense for the creation of a vast new hi-tech industry.

Whittle's disappointments were not over. His third engine design, taken over by Rolls-Royce in 1943 after prolonged delays, emerged as the Welland. Power Jets was nationalised and Whittle appointed as an adviser. In 1946, with jet engine development taking off throughout the world, his company was deprived of all rights to design and develop engines, and converted into the National Gas Turbine Establishment. Whittle was dispatched on lecture tours. Two years later, with the rank of Air Commodore, he was invalided out of the RAF and knighted. He promptly began a second career, as academic, consultant and inventor, first in Britain with the oil companies (the Whittle drill), and, from 1976, in the US.

Anthony Tucker

Frank A Whittle, inventor of the jet engine, born June 1, 1907; died August 8, 1996

Reconstructed revolutionary

Hernan Siles Zuazo

HERNAN SILES ZUAZO, who has died aged 83, was one of the most important figures in Bolivia's turbulent political history. As one of the founding members of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR), he led the bloody 1952 uprising that became known as the Bolivian Revolution. After Mexico and Cuba, it was one of the most far-reaching political movements in Latin America this century, leading to the nationalisation of Bolivia's tin mines, big reforms which gave land to indigenous people, and the introduction of universal suffrage. But it was also short-lived and failed to resolve Bolivia's structural problem of under-development.

Siles was a small, thin, myopic man, whose protruding front teeth earned him the nickname of *conejo* (rabbit). It was a misnomer. He was a man with a well-deserved reputation for courage. During the 1952 uprising, this diminutive man was out in the front, waving a pistol, ahead of miners hurling sticks of dynamite.

His loyalty was of a similar calibre: after the brief, bloody civil war, he was sworn in as interim president. A lesser man would have kept power for himself. Instead, he dutifully surrendered it to his party chief, Victor Paz Estenssoro, who took several days to return from exile in Argentina.

Siles was the son of a president and a full-blooded political animal. But his career seemed almost amateurish. He was double-crossed by those he trusted, and, in the rough-and-tumble of the Bolivian political scene, his idealistic approach sometimes seemed naive.

Siles served as vice president under Paz Estenssoro and was himself elected president in 1956. He pushed ahead with some changes, nationalising the mines and introducing education and agrarian reforms. But he also decided it was necessary to consolidate the gains of the revolution by adopting more orthodox policies. He gave in to pressure from the United States and the International Monetary Fund and introduced tough financial reforms, which alienated the labour movement and made worse the divisions within the MNR.

At the same time, he strengthened the army, which had been dissolved immediately after the revolution. When miners went on strike to protest against the freezing of their wages and the removal of food subsidies, Siles sent in the army to counter peasant and miner militias. Twenty years later, he would look back at this period as the beginning of the betrayal of the revolution.

Paz Estenssoro succeeded Siles to the presidency in 1960. But in 1964, adhering to his high code of personal morality, Siles became fearful that Paz was setting himself up as a *caudillo* (leader) and refused to give him his support for a third term. He successfully conspired with the military to overthrow Paz in November.

Siles Zuazo . . . double-crossed by those he trusted

But this unlikely alliance was short-lived and Siles was forced into exile.

From his exile in Chile and then Argentina, Siles opposed the repressive military regimes that followed. On his return to Bolivia, Siles became increasingly radical as Paz Estenssoro and the other fellow-founders of the MNR veered to the centre-right. At the head of a loose electoral coalition of leftwing parties, Siles won three consecutive elections between 1978 and 1980. But the military refused to let him take office, clinging on to power until 1982 when international and domestic pressure forced them to hand over to civilian rule. When Siles was finally sworn in for his second term as president, it brought to an end 18 years of military rule.

Siles inherited an economy that was a shambles and widespread social unrest. The world price of tin, on which Bolivia was heavily dependent, was at an all-time low. The government was hit by crippling strikes and inflation soared to around 20,000 per cent a year. Siles tried to restage the 1952 revolution from the left. He refused to implement the stringent reforms demanded by the IMF, and Bolivia became the first Latin American country officially to default on its debt.

By late 1984 he was almost totally isolated, unable to control inflation, and facing a hostile congress and labour unrest. When Bolivia's bishops proposed that the election be brought forward a year to 1985, Siles could only acquiesce. Deeply embittered, he went into exile in Uruguay, where he lived until his death.

Hugo Estenssoro and James Hodges

Hernan Siles Zuazo, politician, born March 21, 1914; died August 6, 1996

Cruel end to sixties dream

Ossie Clark

***OSSIE CLARK*, aged 54, one of the most influential figures in post-war British fashion, was stabbed to death at his west London home last week.**

He was one of the British working-class *wunderkinder* who enlivened the art school scene in the 1960s and, finding they were having so much fun, created swinging London as the playpen for it to continue.

Born in Liverpool, Ossie — real name Raymond — was evacuated to Oswaldtwistle on the Lancashire-Yorkshire border, and returned to live in Warrington in 1947. He was, by his own admission, a misfit, dancing to a tune quite different from that followed by the other boys on his council estate.

Destined to be a brickie, he was sent to Warrington technical college, where he did so well that he was accepted by Manchester College of Art to study design. He went on to the Royal College of Art and left in 1964 with a first-class degree — the only student to receive one in his year.

He plunged into swinging London with enthusiasm, and rapidly became one of its characters. Socially, he was a close friend of David Hockney and Andy Warhol; hung out with Jimi Hendrix and Mick Jagger; spent camp weekends at Reddish with Cecil Beaton; and designed the most ravishingly pretty dresses for the girls who surrounded him. Marianne Faithfull, Bianca Jagger, Marie Helvin, Jerry Hall and Twiggy were all part of his life and an inspiration to him.

It was while working at Quorum — one of the most successful King's Road boutiques — that he met the fabric designer Celia Birtwell, with whom he struck up a very successful partnership.

In 1969 they married, and the two were famously painted by their friend David Hockney. The portrait hangs in the Tate. There were two sons, Albert and George, but the marriage ended in 1974.

On the business side, his creative originality was not matched by a commercial instinct and later ambitious ventures foundered. He was declared bankrupt in 1983 and attempts to revive his career failed.

The 1980s scuppered him. The man who said "I detest money" stood no chance of surviving those money-mad days. Ossie Clark went bankrupt in 1981, owing £200,000, and from there it was professionally, emotionally and even socially, more or less downhill all the way.

And yet there was a tremendously moving sense of hope in Ossie Clark. He looked to the future, convinced that his day must come again and his talent be recognised by a new generation.

Colin McDowell

Ossie (Raymond) Clark, fashion designer, born 1942; died August 6, 1996

Stars in their eyes

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

WHAT you should know before you see Independence Day is that this epic, about the day the Earth almost copped its lot from hostile aliens, bears a 12 certificate. You are not going to be scared out of your wits. The first thought you have when you come out is that it is, in fact, a kids' movie for adults.

This is not to downgrade it, but merely to point out that it's less a Close Encounters or Dr Strangelove and more the kind of epic Irwin Allen lusted to make. Lavish in scale, cornball to a T and a wonderfully enthusiastic blend of fifties sci-fi and seventies disaster movies, it works well because it fixes so determinedly on the cinema's past while pasting on to it the kind of special effects the dozens of movies it copies simply couldn't contemplate at the time.

Its one original thought is that the world is saved not by some noble-looking superstar but by the combined resources of a slightly eccentric Jew (Jeff Goldblum), a cocky black American (Will Smith), a drunken specimen of white trash (Randy Quaid) and a President (Bill Pullman) who looks young enough to be Bill Clinton's nephew. Admittedly, it all shows what cardboard can do for character.

The rest of the mortals on display are Hollywood versions of ordinary reality — Goldblum a New York computer nut with a terminally tiresome old kvetch of a father (Judd Hirsch) who sports a yarmulke when all seems lost, Smith a cocky pilot straight from Top Gun who has a stripper for a live-in girlfriend and marries her in the middle of it all, and Quaid a sodden Vietnam veteran who really was picked up by aliens years before but can't get anyone to believe him.

All these enthusiastic puppets are strictly at the service of the special effects. These are not always state of the art but never fail to be artful — whether they involve giant spaceships glowering over New York, LA or Iraq, electro-magnetic ray guns zapping the Empire State Building and the White House or supersonic jets burying themselves in the vast maw of the alien mother ship.

Oddly, considering the huge efforts put into the spectacle, the moments when the apocalypse strikes at the population itself are no more awe-inspiring than when, all those years ago, King Kong trampled around New York with poor Fay Wray in his paws. In fact, really memorable images seem few and far between.

There are some, though, such as when Air Force One, carrying the President and his party, takes off just ahead of the rolling blast created by the alien firestorm and noses its way into the clear in the nick of time. And when Smith, having got hold of an alien pilot, drags the slimy beast in his parachute across the desert towards his rescuers.

Otherwise, there isn't a single thing in the film you haven't seen before — even if you can't quite recall where you've seen it. The point is that you probably haven't seen it all in one movie, and the mixture is fairly heady.

Emmerich doesn't so much direct as orchestrate it all with a firm hand on the tiller and a shrewd eye for what a popcorn movie is really about.

What he's made is not exactly credible, cathartic or even memorably silly, but it is at least all the better for very seldom degenerating either into the camp smile of someone who knows he's only fooling or into the kind of pretension that seems much too hollow to be true.

It is to his credit that he takes the fun seriously, well aware that he is making the biggest B-movie of all time. He's prepared to be simple-mindedly patriotic and, in so doing, to underline the feelgood idea that if only we all worked together we could accomplish almost anything.

A marketing campaign that's even more successful than the film itself appears to have done the rest for him. Expect records to fall like ninepins here, too.

Chekhov is a good enough writer to survive almost anything thrown at him, even in the cinema. Anthony Hopkins's first film as director, August, is a Welsh, but thankfully not a Welsh-language, version of Uncle Vanya.

Intelligently adapted by Julian Mitchell and set near the turn of the century, this is not a tricksy attempt to achieve new relevance but a solid, steady, often very well-acted Vanya, much in the British vein, which focuses on the idea of lives wasting away in the countryside, succoured by drink and sourness.

Of course, you can't help but make the shooting incident funny and that the film certainly does, with Hopkins's Vanya, now called Ieuan, attacking Leslie Phillips's pompous professor as the whole family dive hysterically for cover.

Hopkins is a very fine Ieuan-Vanya, a disappointed souse permanently kicking against the minor pricks of life as if, in doing so, he'll eventually affect the major ones. As a director, he watches himself minutely but very seldom hugs the screen. Kate Burton is fine as the dried-up beauty whom everyone, except possibly her dreadful husband, loves, and Gawn Grainger is an imposing-looking local doctor, rushing off to deal with injured miners between drinking buckets of everyone else's whisky. Phillips is as intolerable as he has to be as the hollow professor.



August . . . Anthony Hopkins stars in his directing debut

What I liked about this very well designed and nicely shot production is that, despite its lack of real cinematic flair, it allows you to see the play clearly and illustrates the drip, drip, drip of disappointed hopes with considerable precision.

If that's dull, it must be because we've forgotten what it's like to listen in the cinema as opposed to have our minds blown away by other means.



Double Hedda . . . Harriet Walter as Ibsen's tragic heroine and Donald Threlfall as the laconically self-destructive Lovborg in Hedda Gabler at Chichester PHOTOGRAPH: ROBBIE JACK

One for the money, two for the show

THEATRE
Michael Billington

TWO Heddas are better than one. In fact the chance to see two different productions of Hedda Gabler — English Touring Theatre's at London's Donmar Warehouse and a new version at the Minerva Studio, Chichester — intensifies one's admiration for Ibsen's technical mastery and the mystery of acting. But if Stephen Unwin's production wins on points over Lindy Davies's at Chichester, it is because it realises a fundamental truth: that Ibsen is providing a portrait of a society as well as of a tormented individual.

The two Heddas themselves are both extraordinary: a mixture of vixen and victim, predator and prey. Alexandra Gilbreath at the Donmar is the more severe, with her hair pressed flat against her skull and her habit of prowling round the parlour. Acutely intelligent and totally unfulfilled, she relentlessly probes her own and other people's weaknesses. What she craves is power over an individual destiny but, when she finally achieves it, she is terrified of the consequences. The great moment in Gilbreath's performance comes when, having sent Eilert Lovborg to certain death, she lets out a cry that starts as triumphant exaltation and turns into gut-wrenching despair.

Harriet Walter at Chichester inevitably makes many of the same points: that Hedda combines innate cowardice with a burning envy of Mrs Elvsted and her capacity to shape another human life. Walter, however, lays more stress on Hedda's suppressed romanticism: she yearns for power but also for an impossible "beauty" in life without the ugly reality of hole-in-corner affairs and an unwanted baby.

BOTH READINGS are sustainable and prove the polyphonic richness of Ibsen's play. But the key difference is that Unwin uses a wonderfully crisp translation by Kenneth McLeish and brings all the characters into unremittingly sharp focus. Crispin Letts's Tesman, for instance, is no pedagogic ninny but an intelligent scholar who, at the last, angrily and consciously rejects Hedda's cruelty. David Killick's Judge Brack is a suave military-moustached lecher who turns the final screw on Hedda with sadistic relish. And Carol Starks's Mrs Elvsted, although patronised by Hedda and Lovborg, has the selfless passion of the genuine literary muse.

Everything in Unwin's production — one of the best Hedda Gablers I've seen — is carefully thought through. When Tesman buries his head in Aunt Julia's lap, you are reminded that he is an orphaned figure constantly seeking mother-substitutes. Unwin creates a whole world that explains the characters' actions.

Lindy Davies's production lacks that mix of detail and linear clarity. Superfluous music introduces each act, speeches overlap, the text "adapted" by Helen Cooper has odd anachronisms such as "you can say that again". Above all, the surrounding characters are seen from Hedda's viewpoint rather than their own. Walter's Hedda aside, the one sharply defined performance is David Threlfall's laconically self-destructive Lovborg.

But the real lesson of this double Hedda is that Ibsen wrote not just a great part but a great play: one in which the protagonist is destroyed not only by her own nature but by an oppressive male-dominated, hypocritical society.

At the Donmar you get Ibsen's complete world: at Chichester you get a fine solo performance.

Loch 'n' roll with Oasis

ROCK
Brian Logan

AMBLE down Balloch's main road any other day of the year and you'd be seduced — or bored — by its simplicity. You might stop at Corries tea shop for a cuppa and a scone; you might tinker with tartans in Loch Lomond Kilts. It's a far cry from . . . well, from Manchester.

When locals heard that Oasis were to visit, they kicked up something of a fuss. How could sleepy Balloch take the strain of these rock gods and 80,000 boisterous disciples? We have, they protested, only one public lavatory.

Yet the horde that flocked to Loch Lomond last weekend was extended a warm(ish) reception. "West Dumbartonshire Council Welcomes You" read the signs; West Dumbartonshire residents, meanwhile, glared proprietorially from their windows.

Rumour has it that forward-thinking revellers had come to Balloch Country Park before the construction of the arena to bury their drugs beyond the investigation of the wiliest police officer. If there is an epidemic of blissed-out rabbits in the west of Scotland, we'll know why.

From the back of the natural auditorium, next to Balloch Castle, the panorama took in first the stage, then the wooded ebb and swell of the wilds, and to one side the silver plain of Loch Lomond, disappearing into a distant glen.

The vast crowd was warned, as darkness closed in, to look out for irritating pests. Then Patsy Kensit appeared, peering from the wings. Her fiancé needs £50,000 to pay for her engagement ring. It was time for him to start earning it.

The show began, not with a bang, but with 20,000 simpers. Liam bounded on stage, postured and wiped his arse in now-traditional performing-monkey fashion. The pre-music entertainment involved hooting a bloated football into the crowd. His kick was lame; with adherents like these, it's no wonder Manchester City went down. After some minutes alone — marking out his territory, as wild animals are wont to do — Gallagher junior was joined by his brother and his band. Noel retained his dignity, providing some of the finest moments when the littl'un was taking time out.

When the last guitar-string twanged, fireworks exploded into the night sky, shattering once and for all the rural calm. This was a show, all right. Oasis will be hoping that, like those rockets, the recording of the event will propel them into the American stratosphere. As a sea of euphoric souls broke its banks and spilled out of this sometimes serene glade, leaving an ocean-bed of litter in its wake, Balloch would have been hoping so too.

Second nature

ART
John Gittings

WHEN Chinese landscape artists had to produce politically correct works in the age of Mao Zedong, they resorted to all sorts of subtle devices. The group of scholars drinking tea beneath the waterfall was replaced by a party of healthy socialist youth. Red flags and pylons sprouted on the mountain peaks.

But modern Chinese art had already been wrestling with the rival demands of tradition and modernity for half a century, and the communist revolution only presented a new dimension of complexity.

The results were sometimes banal. But more often they were brilliant, as we can now see in an exciting exhibition at the British Museum until the end of September, which presents this vast subject with admirable clarity.

There is only one pylon picture on show — but it is a classic of its kind. Song Wenzhi's Spring Morning In Lake Dongting (1973) shows junks and black-tiled houses between paddy fields, viewed from a wooded hillside through a wraith of mist — plus the pylons, placed in improbable positions.

More dubious politically, Pan Tianshou's Morning Mist (1961) shows a balding eagle, feathers dishevelled but about to soar off through the gallery. Perhaps Pan intended to illustrate socialist resolve? He was still denounced by Madame Mao for painting a "very gloomy eagle" and accused of being an agent for imperialism.

But the great dialectic between tradition and innovation is much more than a question of politics, embracing form as much as content.

Social realism was explored — long before socialist realism — by painters such as Xu Beihong in his naturalistic figure work. In 1912, after the revolution that overthrew the Manchu emperors, a far-sighted minister of education proposed the setting-up of a Western-type art school where students would be encouraged to express themselves freely. Traditional painting — the *guohua* or "national painting" — had become lifeless and hackneyed, depicting endless bamboos and flowers, sages and birds. This exhibition presents the various types of innovative painting that arose.

The Lingnan School in Canton combined modern themes with Chinese techniques. In Shanghai and Beijing the *xieyi* style of "free and spontaneous brushwork" emerged, with strong bold colour that was often influenced by Western oils. Its proponents included the great master Qi Baishi (1864-1957), the carpenter-turned-painter best known for his birds and shrimps.

Socialist — as distinct from social — realism is poorly represented: the exhibition comes from Hong Kong and reflects the preferences of private collectors there. The revolutionary romanticism of the Cultural Revolution is also ignored, though with the mainland about to take over this may owe more to political caution than to artistic taste.

With the professionals in disgrace Cultural Revolutionary art was produced by collectives of "art workers", with brilliant colours and heroic figures. Peasant paintings and the woodcut art of the revolution had a strong effect upon style. All of this is now written off, though there were some striking results.

Traditional art values were quickly re-discovered after Mao's death, for tradition has unusual power in Chinese art. Some painters were actually directed to return to tradition while Mao was still alive. A small group known as the Hotel School was brought together in the early seventies to produce birds-and-flower paintings for Chinese embassies abroad and new hotels at home. Today, most paintings offered for sale to foreign visitors are still in the classical mould, often produced by distinguished provincial painters.

This interplay between tradition and innovation may become circular: the artists never entirely escape their cultural roots. Some never want to. And eventually the labels begin to lose meaning. Li Keran is now classed as a traditionalist for his scholarly brushwork, yet in the sixties his naturalistic approach seemed thoroughly modern.

A few artists in this exhibition, mostly younger, mostly outside the mainland, have taken the next step from innovation to invention.

There was until recently a strong avant garde on the mainland, here represented by Shao Fei, who began her painting during the Cultural Revolution in the People's Liberation Army. I first met her work in the heady time of Democracy Wall (1979-80), when a group of amateurs calling themselves the Single Spark sought to set art alight with a hotchpotch of surrealism and symbolism.

Outside the Beijing Art Gallery, one artist had put up a mocking poster: Question: I can't understand this picture. All I can see is colours leaping about.

Answer: You have understood the picture correctly.

This fascinating exhibition raises a deeper question, beyond the birds and pine trees, whether in traditional or innovative style: where will Chinese art, already 2000 years old, go now?



Ruffled feathers . . . The 'gloomy eagle' in Pan Tianshou's Morning Mist (1961) earned him the title 'agent of imperialism'

League of his own

Andrew Clements applauds the Proms for devoting a whole day to the work of Igor Stravinsky

THE arguments about who are the most important composers of the 20th century have started already, and are likely to carry on well into the next millennium without any real likelihood of a consensus. But one figure is above the discussion: Igor Stravinsky will be the first name down on every list.

There is no one else in our era whose achievement has been so immense and so varied, no one, perhaps in the whole history of music, who has altered its course as drastically in a single work as he did in 1913 with the premiere of The Rite Of Spring. And there is no major composer whose career underwent so many changes of direction yet who managed to stay so true to himself, never writing a single bar of music that was not imprinted with his distinctive personality. On Sunday, the Proms devoted a whole day to his music — three concerts spanning his output — and it's hard to think of anyone who deserves that accolade more thoroughly.

If Stravinsky began his composing career as a paradigm of modernism — one of the pioneers, along with Debussy, who took music into a brave new world in the first decades of the century — he ended it in a self-contained musical world that was entirely his own creation, refining his own austere version of serial technique which moved in an entirely different direction from that taken by the young lions of the post-war avant garde.

His earliest published work, the F sharp minor Piano Sonata, was begun in 1903, when he was studying in St Petersburg with Rimsky-Korsakov; his last completed composition, a setting of Edward Lear's The Owl And The Pussy Cat, was completed in 1966. And he lived and composed through the most tumultuous and rapidly changing period in musical history, often acting as the catalyst for the changes himself.

Born in 1883, the year Wagner died, by the time of his own death in 1972 the early minimalists, Riley, Reich and Glass, had already begun to forge their own new language, which itself would have been unthinkable without the example of Stravinsky's own emancipation of pulse and rhythm 60 years earlier. It was a long journey through an ever-changing musical landscape, which took Stravinsky physically through four countries, beginning in pre-revolutionary Russia and ending in the United States, where he settled at the start of the second world war.

It is of course his early masterpieces, especially the first three ballets for Diaghilev, The Firebird, Petrushka, and The Rite Of Spring, that have remained Stravinsky's most popular and most often performed scores. But his output was enormous, and there are still major works from all periods in his life that remain too little known.

The 1922 opera Mavra, a farewell to his Russian heritage, is hardly ever heard, let alone staged; many of the major neo-classical scores are part of the orchestral repertory, but the haunting melodrama Persephone of 1934 gets an airing less often than it deserves. And though the Proms included a performance of The Flood, Stravinsky's highly compressed version of the biblical Creation, written in 1962, the late works have never established themselves. Even Agon, a ballet masterpiece from 1957, to be ranked at least alongside Petrushka and Apollo, is only a fixture in the ballet repertory. But pieces like Threni, his first completely serial score, the iconoclastic Movements for piano and orchestra, and the last major work Requiem Canticles, which looks back over 60 years to the liturgy of the Russian Orthodox church, remain virtually unknown.

Without a grasp on those late pieces especially, the full breadth of Stravinsky's creativity is hard to delineate. Everything he touched he made his own: even Pulcinella, the 1920 reworking of Pergolesi that made the whole of his, and everyone else's, neoclassicism possible, sounds modern, 20th century, and could have been conceived by one composer. It was one of his turning points: after that epiphany there was no going back. But then there was never any going back; Stravinsky's music always went forward, always sought out new challenges and always, triumphantly, met them.

Holmes on the Waterloo warpath

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

WAR WALKS (BBC 2), like a good general, does wonders with very limited resources. The field and farms of Waterloo . . . one cannon ball . . . one musket . . . and one historian, Richard Holmes, terrier-like in manner and moustache.

Waterloo literally was a foreign field, a few acres of farmland, fertile with blood and bone. It is very quiet now. The countryside is featureless and flat. The sky is vast and vacant.

Holmes knocked on the door of La Haye Sainte, which was an abbatoir on June 18, 1815. It is still a working farm. The farmer keeps the shot he finds in a pewter pot and is not much troubled with tourists: "There's nothing to see." But is there nothing to hear . . . sometimes . . . on quiet summer nights?

The 27th Regiment (Inniskillings) fought until they fell, still in their square. A small granite headstone records their noble record of stubborn endurance and Wellington's bleak comment, "They saved the centre of my line."

You can tell that this was not a man to waste breath on adjectives. Asked if it was true that he shouted, "Up guards and at 'em!", he denied it. "I probably said, 'Stand up, guards. Make ready. Fire!' " I seem to hear the reporter of the Waterloo Bugle groan. That is not the same thing at all.

The temperamental difference between Napoleon and Wellington is something you can taste. Apart from the obvious clues, guess which one flung open his jacket, showing his bemedalled breast, crying, "Soldiers, would you shoot your Emperor?" and which one wrote, "PS. I forgot to tell you I was made a duke."

As Sellar and Yeatman said, Napoleon wore his hat like *this* and Wellington wore his hat like *that*. You just knew they weren't going to get on. However, I did notice that Wellington had a life-sized, naked, marble statue of Napoleon in his London house. Odd, really.

Waterloo was the last, great, bareknuckle fight.

They seem now like another breed of men. When Lord Paget said, "Good God, my leg's been struck off!" Wellington replied, "Good God, man, so it has." When Marshal Blücher was ridden over by three French cavalry charges, he got up and headed for the sound of gunfire. He was 73. Endurance was a necessary military virtue before what Queen Victoria was to call "this blessed, blessed chloroform".

"For God's sake, die like a man before these 'ere Frenchies," a sergeant said to a groaning soldier in a field hospital.

Holmes showed us a surgeon's tools, a cannon ball and how to fire it, a musket and how to shoot it. Steven Clarke's imaginative direction, without the sniff of a horse, gave some real feeling of a cavalry charge.

Napoleon, going into exile, said ironically there would be time to write his memoirs. Wellington did not write How I Won Waterloo. You just knew he wouldn't.

It said in this book I was reading that yawning and groaning are good for you. Nothing like a good groan, apparently, for oxygenating and empowering you. So how come I need a holiday when I get a good hour's yawning and groaning every week with *Savannah* (ITV)?

Savannah is one of Aaron Spelling's flock of turkeys. Spelling specialises in family feuds and dirty dealings. You will recognise — from the original Dynasty template — the galvanic plot, the sudden squalls, the impossibility of predicting anyone's behaviour, the frequent but decently draped sex, the *teeth*.

Peyton and Tom were having sex on a roulette table. Easier than on a roulette wheel, I imagine.

Peyton is the daughter of Lucille, who is behind bars that would hold back a *bear*, for killing Travis, who was married to Reece, the daughter of Edward, whose wife ran away with the father of Tom because he had an illegitimate daughter, Peyton. (See above.) Oh, do try and keep up.

Next week Edward runs for the Senate and founds a Home for Fallen Women. Tell me how it works out. I'm off.

Time to give up the day job

Mark Lawson

Popcorn
by Ben Elton
Simon & Schuster 298pp £12.99

THERE is an inevitable suspicion of novelists already established as celebrities in other fields. They are able to bypass the traditional apprenticeship of fiction and appeal to a ready-made readership. So one of the impressive aspects of Ben Elton's terrific fourth novel is the clear sense that he has worked and worried at the craft. Although his first three books were easy bestsellers, he seems to have comprehended their faults — sprawling construction, hectoring tone, fashionable causes — and set himself to correct them.

Popcorn takes place over one day — Academy Awards night in Hollywood — and takes on only one subject: the relationship between screen violence and street violence.

Oliver Stone is currently being sued by the family of a murder victim who claim that the killer took his cue from the director's movies. Elton's fictional Oscar-winner, Bruce Delamitri — whose ironic, post-modernist splatter movies are an obvious homage to both Stone and Quentin Tarantino — suffers an audience reaction more cruel and terrible than any lawsuit. On the night that Bruce wins the Best Film


Ben Elton: spirited and intelligent

statuette for his latest sardonic bloodbath, a pair of psychopathic mass-murderers who can recite every line of his films break into the director's Malibu home and take him hostage with assorted family and colleagues.

This inspired fictional premise is developed at three equally convincing levels: as a comedy, as a thriller and as a genuine moral debate. Given Elton's previous form as a comedian and co-writer of the Blackadder series, the jokes are the least surprising of these achievements. They are, though, very sharp. Bruce's Oscar acceptance speech — "I stand here on legs of fire . . . you are the wind beneath my wings and I flap for you . . ." — is a fine parody of that notoriously vapid rhetorical form. The extracts from Bruce's film — in which suspiciously literate killers deconstruct figures of speech between slayings — also come from a recognisable cinematic reservoir. Pressed by a bimbo television presenter on whether viewers imitate what they see, Bruce smartly replies that if this were true all her own viewers would "have their hair set in concrete and their brain sucked out along with their cellulite".

More surprising is the book's tight plotting. The star of stand-up has contrived a stand-off of real tension, in which Bruce's kidnappers, Wayne and Scout, broadcast live on every channel in America. The killers, children of the TV age, have asked for a direct feed from the ratings computer, so that they can watch their fame inflate second by second. The story takes a fiendish final twist, which it would be spiteful to reveal, other than to say that the American people are asked to make a collective sacrifice to save the lives of the hostages. This sacrifice involves such a deeply enshrined modern American right — the right to voyeurism — that they prove unable to make it.

The really startling aspect of the book, however, is its stance. If the novel had, in the modern American fashion, first been attributed to "Anonymous", the spot-the-author pieces would surely have fingered Richard Littlejohn or Paul Johnson rather than this established jester of the left. There are grouches about "self-righteous feminism, the modern equivalent of hiding behind a woman's petticoats", while the young are spikily libelled in the line: "Generation X? Generation X-tremely fucking stupid." The novel does not, in fact, support censorship of violent movies. Elton is variously snide and kind to both sides of the debate in nearly equal measure. The target for his anger is more general: what he sees as an endemic American tendency to transfer responsibility to someone else. The adulterer who declares himself a sex addict and checks into a clinic. The child who kills both parents and blames sexual abuse in childhood. The media point the finger at the politicians; the politicians accuse the media. The killer accuses the film-maker; the film-maker indicts society. "Nobody gets blamed for anything in this country," Bruce laments at gun-point. "Nothing is anybody's fault." You can easily imagine these points being made in some non-fiction tract called "Blameless Nation". But what's most impressive about Popcorn is its integration of story and thought. The plot-twists detonate the moral dilemmas, the commentary is in the comedy.

This spirited and intelligent book about whether entertainment can engender imitation certainly leaves you hoping for a spate of copycat novels from Elton.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Notes From a Small Island, by Bill Bryson (Black Swan, £6.99)

NIGEL WILLIAMS'S From Wimbledon To Waco was about a Brit in America, and not funny. This is about an American over here, and funny. Bryson has two major advantages: he has been over here for some time, and can write. Sample throwaway line: "For all I knew, when a car had an L-plate on the back of it, it indicated that it was being driven by a leper." Not only is this book hilarious, it is a farewell love-letter to this country, a work of generosity and intelligence that should shame us into treating our heritage better. Bon voyage, Bill, and please do come back soon.

BSE: the Facts, by Brian J Ford (Corgi, £4.99)

THE ONLY fact everyone seems to agree on is that John Selwyn Gummer shouldn't have crammed that beef burger into his poor daughter's mouth six years ago. Still, this has the air of being a pretty useful book, readable, not prone to hysteria and capable of taking the long view. (He also points out the startlingly counter-intuitive fact that kine are, technically, carnivores. Check it out: pp 89-91.) Also has the best blurb copy ever seen on the back of a book: "It must be read by everyone who eats."

Goethe's Collected Works, Volume 12: Scientific Studies, ed & trs Douglas Miller (Princeton, £12.95)

PRINCETON'S 12-volume selection from Goethe's whole represents only about a tenth of his output, but it's the best English edition we're ever going to get. The volume contains large chunks from his scientific writings, and while time has proved many of his theories wrong, he was far less wrong than most of his contemporaries. His "Theory of Colour" was, he thought, the best thing he'd ever written; "Towards a Theory of Weather" has passages which come close to poetry — understandably enough, considering how important the natural world was to him.

Trainspotting: The Screenplay, by John Hodge (Faber, £8.99)

ACHTUNG! As you know, it is now illegal for any household in the country not to (a) have a copy of Trainspotting: the Novel, (b) have seen Trainspotting: the Movie or (c) been to Trainspotting: the Play. Torvill and Dean's Trainspotting on Ice has been held over for technical reasons. "Trainspotter" detector vans are operating in your area. You have been warned: the penalties for non-compliance are gruesome.

Outsider inside Catalonia

Colm Tóibín

The Lone Man
by Bernardo Atxaga
translated by Margaret Jull Costa
Harvill £15.99 hdbk; £9.99 pbk

TOWARDS the end of The Lone Man, Bernardo Atxaga's second novel, his hero Carlos, a former Basque terrorist living outside Barcelona, looks at the people around him. "Of all the people he saw as they drove towards Calle Aribau, only four seemed to inhabit the same territory as him: a thin man who looked like a criminal, a couple who looked like junkies and the injured or ill person being transported in an ambulance with the siren blaring." Carlos is an existential hero and a Basque in Catalonia. He enjoys only baking bread, playing with his two dogs and hanging around an ancient spring close to the hotel which he and two friends have bought on the proceeds of a bank raid.

Carlos likes women, and watches them carefully, and has built a special underground room, a dungeon with cushions, where he can go with them. But the new hotel receptionist wants nothing to do with him, and in any case two Basque terrorists are hiding in his den.

This novel is slow and dense and heavy going at times; often there is too much detail, too much repetition. Carlos is plagued by a literary device whereby two dead characters whisper comments and warnings into his ear throughout the book, and most of the time this is irritating and disconcerting. But his character is so carefully imagined and rendered with such precision and authenticity that the narrative becomes compelling.

It would have been easy for Atxaga to have written a novel about an old terrorist being forced to hide two of his comrades, with car chases and cheap thrills, but he has avoided all of that. He has portrayed instead with great force a deeply wounded individual, haunted by the Basque country, by his brother who is in a mental hospital and by a lost idealism.

Terrorism in the book is shown as a dull and unexciting business, and for this alone Atxaga should be given a prize. (He has won most of the Spanish literary prizes.) Carlos's time in prison is barely mentioned in the book and yet Atxaga manages to suggest that Carlos and his two colleagues in the hotel are still recovering from being locked up, and are, indeed, still incarcerated in the hotel. They dream of a new life, but it is clear that he is locked into his days on the edge of the motorway.

The Lone Man is an old-fashioned novel: the lone, male anti-hero, the outsider, gets small comfort from the world around him, his gloom and ennui impel the narrative. But it is also an interesting portrait of modern Spain. The Basque in Catalonia becomes a brilliant image of alienated man. And the picture of former terrorists released by an amnesty running an hotel, unsure that either the past or the future means very much, has a certain resonance in Spain now.

In his first novel Atxaga inherited the legacy of Borges and Juan Goytisolo; in this new book he has moved closer to the world of Sartre and Camus, and been distracted somewhat by too many devices, but the power of the writing is still there. It is now Atxaga's fate, or maybe his good luck, as one of the few Basque writers ever to be translated to have to deal with the lack of a literary tradition in his own language and the wealth, almost exhausted perhaps, of tradition that is all around him. His progress will be fascinating.

Britain's flexible friend

Peter Clarke

The Transformation of British Politics, 1860-1995
by Brian Harrison
Oxford 618pp £50 (£14.99 pbk)

IN THE days when English nationalism took the form of simply assuming a tacit superiority rather than painting your face with the flag, there was no greater object of veneration than "the English Constitution" — the title, of course, of Walter Bagehot's classic book.

At the outset of his own formidable study, Brian Harrison says of Bagehot: "The English Constitution is the inevitable starting point for any account of how British government has come to be what it now is."

While Whiggish historians once celebrated the unfolding of a pattern of parliamentary government that was the envy of the world, historical revisionism now suggests other perspectives, focused on a decline in confidence in British institutions and a readiness to entertain constitutional reform. The monarchy has tumbled precipitately from the public esteem it enjoyed in the post-war period, giving republican projects a credibility which they have not enjoyed this century. Parliament has lost prestige; politicians are no longer accorded respect in pursuing an honourable calling.

Proposals for electoral reform reflect dissatisfaction with the British model of adversarial politics, legitimated in a two-party system. The Civil Service, once lauded as a Rolls-Royce machine, has been cut back, its mandarin ethic challenged by the norms of new public management. Issues of national identity have offered the strongest challenge since the Home Rule crisis to the representative claims of Westminster. The unwritten constitution itself has come to be questioned.

Brian Harrison is an admirable guide to the history that has produced the state of our current politics. Having begun with a critical examination of Bagehot's system as it existed in the 1860s, Harrison looks at the influence of empire and public welfare in fuelling new demands upon it, and at the various nationalist challenges to the integrity of the United Kingdom. He argues that "the flexibility of the British political system and the responsiveness of those who manage it may yet enable us to retain the cultural, economic, and other benefits of a multi-nation state by the only means feasible in a liberal society: through combining curbs on central government with a genuine belief in local self-government".

Unfashionably maintaining that it ain't broke, Harrison is sceptical about any need to fix it — at least in any respect that breaks with the incremental patch-and-mend style of British constitutional tinkering. Indeed, the monarchy is one of two subjects which bring out unwonted feelings of awe in this otherwise dispassionate author. Hence his confidence that "the British constitution's flexibility will no doubt ensure that common sense prevails in this area as so often earlier elsewhere".

The only other object for which Harrison manifests such constant regard is the two-party system. He has made himself spokesman of the view that its virtue rests in its centrist tendencies. This is all of a piece with his eminently impartial commendation of the liberalism variously shown by both major parties.

But Harrison has no time for the suggestion that it was the electoral system that helped keep Thatcher in power, since all that was needed was "overt Lib-Lab coalition or merger". Just like that! It seems odd in a book so fruitfully committed to a historical understanding of British politics.

Arthur C Clarke at his Colombo home PHOTOGRAPH: NICHOLAS BOUTMAN

Clarke's final odyssey

Ian Katz in New York and Flora Botsford in Colombo

ARTHUR C CLARKE, the futurist guru and grand old man of science fiction, has completed what he expects to be his last major flight of fancy, the final volume in the series of novels that began with 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Clarke, aged 79, secreted himself in Colombo's oldest hotel for three months to finish 3001: The Final Odyssey, to be published next spring by the New York company Del-Rey Books.

The deal is understood to be one of the largest yet for a science fiction work. Clarke, who moved to Sri Lanka from his native Britain in 1952 to indulge his passion for scuba diving, will say only: "It's a nine-figure sum, and that's including the cents."

Since as a young boy he began day-dreaming about the future, Arthur C Clarke has written more than 70 books. Following the massive success of the 1968 Stanley Kubrick film 2001: A Space Odyssey, co-written with the director, he penned two more volumes of the futuristic space adventure.

His latest book is set on Ganymede, Jupiter's largest moon. According to Del-Rey, work on the novel was delayed by the Challenger disaster in 1986. Mr Clarke had hoped to use information from the Galileo space probe but had completed the work by the time the first images of Ganymede were beamed back to Earth.

Mr Clarke is revered not merely for weaving hi-tech fantasies but for predicting technological developments long before anyone else has dreamt of them.

As a young RAF officer, he described a system of "rocket stations" in fixed orbits over the earth that might some day be used to beam communications between different points on the earth's surface. Now communication via geostationary satellites is taken for granted.

The final novel in the Space Odyssey series explores the idea of cyber-warfare, one of Mr Clarke's current preoccupations. "If the technology was available, computers could cause havoc with things like defence systems," he says.

The author is largely confined to a wheelchair by post-polio syndrome. He stays abreast of technological developments, keeping in touch with a network of scientists via the Internet, and monitoring the heavens with his roof-top telescope.

He is now resting after completing 3001: A Final Odyssey, and says he is in the process of teaching his computer how to "take dictation". Meanwhile he is following news of Hollywood interest in his latest book with relish. "My agent is dealing with over 80 offers — but of course Stanley Kubrick has first refusal."

A man for all futuristic seasons

On the eve of the publication of his new short stories, sci-fi author Ray Bradbury talks to **Tom Hutchinson**

WHEN American preachers choke on the Old Testament, they clear their throats by quoting Ray Bradbury. Their exodus from Moses directs them into the promised lands of the veteran science fiction writer.

Bradbury discovered that some Bible-belters were getting uplift from him when they wrote to thank him. "I was so flattered. I had letters saying that some of them were reading my more optimistic fiction from the pulpit. And the congregations were going for it!"

So what did he do? What any American go-getter would do. Like one of the pioneering people about whom he wrote so persuasively in The Martian Chronicles and The Golden Apples Of The Sun, he leapt on the bandwagon of the main chance.

To coincide with the September publication of Quicker Than The Eye, a book of short stories, he's also written A Chap-Book For Burnt-Out Rabbis, Priests And Ministers. "That's specially for those who would like an alternative. I may not believe in their personal religions, but I have tremendous faith in the Cosmos, in the Life Force for good."

A forgivable belief in himself, too. As the premiere of the spectacular science-fiction movie Independence Day looms over Britain like a vast mother-ship, Bradbury has taken out an advertisement in Daily Variety urging that The Martian Chronicle be similarly filmed. "The ad cost me 4,000 bucks, but I wanted producers to know it was still available."

Raymond Douglas Bradbury is 76 next month, but he is still a mighty player on America's literary and media scene, proclaiming that Independence Day proves something he has always said, something film-makers were too stupid to understand: that fantasy always makes money at the box-office."

"You know, Independence, with its threat of alien invasion, is a throwback to the paranoid SF film of the fifties, The Day The World Stood Still or my own It Came From Outer Space. With this new film the aliens mean us harm. To that extent it's anti-ET or Close Encounters Of The Third Kind, with creatures that meant us good. Once again we're under threat."

Christopher Isherwood called Bradbury a poet; chubby and bespectacled, he is still a man with a head full of singing birds, though now they've been orchestrated to sing to a pitch that makes him one of the richest writers around. He has become a literary superstar. The Apollo 15 astronauts named a moon-indentation Dandelion Crater after his book Dandelion Wine.

His creativity still revs at top-

'It is not that people in Hollywood are naturally dishonest; just that some of them feel they have to be'

speed. The man who earned his first money in literature at the age of 15, by writing gags for comedian George Burns, has just written a treatise for The Shaw Society with a title as unwieldy as its ideas are supple — GBS: Refurbishing The Tin Woodman; Science Fiction With A Heart, A Brain And The Nerve. It's the Shavian idea of a life-force to which he corresponds.

He speaks with brimming enthusiasm: "I know it sounds painfully corny, but every minute of being alive is an adventure, a festival of discovery." Part of that ongoing euphoria is in being married to Maggie, who has borne him four daughters, so that he now has seven grandchildren.

But, for a writer, he has had a life rich in physical incident outside his imagination. One of the most horrendous was scripting Moby Dick for John Huston who, while they were in Ireland, sent round two boxers to beat him up because of a disagreement. Bradbury escaped the boxers, but not the trauma of the event.

Years later, he went up to the great man in a restaurant. "I want you to know I forgive you," he said. "You changed my life." Maggie said: "But you hate him so. Why did you do that?" Bradbury responded: "But he did change my life — for the better. After Moby Dick I could take my talent anywhere." He wrote a novel about Huston, though, to fully exorcise the experience from his system.

He has always seen Hollywood as, literally, a Planet Hollywood: a place where human beings become alien in their dealings with each other. When he was asked to script The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms he realised it had been plagiarised from his own story, The Foghorn. Shamefacedly, the producer paid up for the rights.

"It's not that people in Hollywood are naturally dishonest; it's just that some of them feel that they have to be."

Ray Bradbury bears no grudges, but he wishes that movies had happier endings. "What I mean is that villains should get their comeuppance . . . Films are for solving life. Not for making it more difficult."

He plans mightily ahead. He wants to write another treatise, on the way Herman Melville's Moby Dick resembles Jules Verne's Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea: "Captain Ahab is the reverse of Captain Nemo. And I can prove it in so many ways."

He left me to go on holiday with his beloved Maggie in his beloved France. A man who has seen his dreams become reality around him. A renaissance man for all futuristic seasons.

Later, I got a note thanking me for being his guest at luncheon. He had paid for the lunch. They don't make men with manners like that these days. Unless, of course, they come from other planets.

Kiss and make up

Darian Leader

On Kissing: From the Metaphysical to the Erotic
by Adrienne Blue
Gollancz 224pp £14.99

AT WHAT moment is it best to stop talking and to start kissing? Some people, it would seem, prefer talking and others prefer kissing, but it is certain that you can't do both at the same time. Kissing may do away with speaking, but a kiss has always got something to say.

Once you know how someone kisses, you know a lot about that person. You know what they have been doing, or not doing, you know if they believe in romance or lust, you know how they would like to be kissed themselves and you know, too, if they have been to the movies. Kisses themselves can be greedy, meek, impertinent, uncommunicative. They can be dry, moist, wet, transitory, interminable. They can, in short, tell you a lot. It is this telling which becomes, for the lover, both the sweetness and the barrier of kissing.

Many of the scholars who, like Adrienne Blue, have turned their attention to kissing, have concluded that the erotic kiss has its source in the suckling relation of child to mother. This is unsound. Suckling and kissing are fundamentally different activities, in the sense that suckling is not initially a learnt activity, but kissing is. For many men, the only thing that matters about a woman's bosom is the success — or failure — of making the nipple erect. If there is indeed a link to kissing, it will not be in sucking but in the discontinuities of the kiss — the moments of hesitation, of refusing, of withdrawing.

Kissing, as its histories show, is a sign. The Christian kiss of peace, the Judas kiss of betrayal, the divine kiss which impregnates the Virgin, the kiss of salutation, the Mafia kiss of death — they all show how an action, by taking on disparate meanings, can become a sign of something else. Hence the question, to what extent is an erotic kiss a sign? Does it point, like those other kisses, to something else or is it an end, a satisfaction in itself? Some men have the curious idea that if another creature consents to a kiss, that means that intercourse will follow. How can we be sure that a kiss might not mean more, or less, than we think? And if we think after a kiss, what happens when, in kissing, we think? Perhaps the real problem of kissing is exactly that: since the kiss is a sign, it makes us think, but if we think when we kiss, we botch the kiss.

Adrienne Blue's volume catalogues not just the erotic kiss, but the kiss in (some) literature, history, photography and sculpture. She devotes one section of her book to a discussion of Rodin's "The Kiss". It is a fact that if all the world loves a lover, not all the world loves the man who kisses in public. They don't love him because they think that he is not thinking, but enjoying. The public kisser would be hated half as much if it was realised that his or her kiss was, already, half a thought.

Red alert for grey squirrels

Paul Evans

IN AN angry, screeching wheeze, a harassed female grey squirrel at the bottom of the garden has had enough of male squirrels behaving badly, and is giving them what for. She's not the only one. A shrill chorus of conservation and land-owning agencies has also got it in for grey squirrels. And if they have their way the pesky varmints won't breed. Ever.

Grey squirrels have been trouble ever since they were introduced to Britain from North America in the late 19th century. They stand accused of criminal damage to young trees; egg-stealing and disrupting nesting birds; nicking nuts from bird tables; and, most seriously, causing the decline of the red squirrel. For their punishment, they must be cleansed: shot, poisoned, trapped, infected with an impotency virus. And why not? After all, they're only tree-rats, invading aliens, vermin.

The British population of red squirrels peaked at several million in 1915, but began to fall from 1920 and has now crashed to 160,000. The grey squirrel population has meanwhile risen to 2½ million.



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Greys are better at digesting nuts. Reds are fussier about nuts, but are much lighter animals and need to bulk up for hibernation. So if the greys have nabbed all the nuts, it's curtains for the reds. This has led to renewed efforts to protect the woods where red squirrels survive and to proposals to attack the greys. According to a recent discovery, grey squirrels may have introduced a disease into red squirrels that is hastening their decline.

The strategy for red squirrel conservation, launched this month, comes from an alliance of powerful interests. The Country Landowners Association, the Forestry Commission and the Timber Growers Association do not just want to protect the red squirrel: they have been waging war on greys for decades because of the damage greys cause to woodland. Agencies charged with the legal protection of the endangered red squirrel, as well as scientific institutions and wildlife groups, are there to protect and enhance biodiversity. In short, the dice are loaded against grey squirrels.

Although the effort to protect red squirrels and their habitats is to be applauded, the strategy for cleansing Britain of grey squirrels raises important issues which deserve a proper airing.

"Wildlife" emerged as a concept studded with images of "flagship" species in conservation circles. Our endearing native red, with its Squirrel Nutkin associations, offers a powerful image. By contrast the greys fly the Jolly Roger and are prey to the xenophobia levelled at "invasive alien species". Ecological intervention tends to champion certain aspects of nature and forms of biological diversity, and to crusade against others. Conservation is seen by some as protecting the nature we like from the nature we don't.

Reaction to "problem" alien species involves moral decisions. Who makes those decisions and in what way are they accountable? We owe it to the red squirrel to do what we can to help it back from the brink of extinction.

Although it is accepted that the complete removal of grey squirrels in Britain would not be tolerated by the public, even if it were possible, how much of a slaughter should we sanction in the process? There is much more at stake here than a simple choice between red and grey. The grey squirrel at the bottom of the garden has a very capable voice of her own. But she needs moral support.

Chess Leonard Barden

BRITAIN'S 22-year-old champion Matthew Sadler has made another move towards the top echelon of world chess by winning the traditional Austrian Open at Oberwart with an unbeaten 8/9.

Oberwart is always one of the strongest European opens due its geographical convenience for the large number of hungry Russian, Ukrainian and Serbian grandmasters who arrive in their battered Ladas and normally depart loaded with Deutschmarks. Despite such powerful opposition, Sadler won his first three rounds against unrated opponents and then scored 5/6 against GMs.

Sadler was favourite to retain his title when the annual BCF congress opened last week at Nottingham University. More than 700 players are contesting the national championships for women, veterans, and age-group titles for juniors and girls, down to under-sevens.

M Sadler (Eng) v V Burmakin (Rus)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Few GMs like to defend the Queen's Gambit exchange variation since Black's game is passive.

Be7 6 e3 h6 7 Bh4 0-0 8 Bd3 Nbd7 9 Nge2 b6 10 0-0 c5 11 Rc1 Bb7 12 Bb1 c4 13 f3 Re8 14 Bf2 a6 15 Ng3 Bd6 16 Re1 b5 17 a3 Qb6 18 Nf5 Bc7 19 Qd2 a5 20 a4 b4. Black's unsophisticated strategy — gaining *Lebensraum* on the Q-side but ignoring the rest of the board — often appears in amateur chess. Sadler refutes it in classical style by driving Black's rook and bishop out, then breaking through in the centre.

21 Nb5 Bb8 22 e4! dxe4 23 d5 Qa6 24 d6 Bc6 If exf3 25 Rxe8+ Nxe8 26 Qd4 fxg2 27 Re1 is crushing.

25 Ne7+ Kf8 26 Nxc6 Qxc6 27 Qd4 Ne5 If exf3 28 Rxe8+ Nxe8 (Kxe8 29 Rxc4) 29 Be4 wins.

28 Bxe4 Nxe4 29 Rxe4 f6 30 f4 Nf7 31 Rxe8+ Qxe8 32 d7 Qd8 33 Re1 Be5 Desperation against 34 Re8+.

34 fxe5 Nxe5 35 Qd5 Resigns. If Nxd7 36 Nd6 Ne5 37 Rxe5 soon mates.

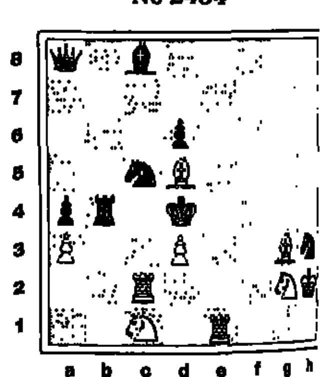
Following Oberwart and an earlier first prize in Italy, Sadler's Fide rating will advance to 2,645, where he will join Nigel Short and Michael Adams among the world top 30 players. His fine form has sparked growing optimism among UK chess fans for next month's olympiad at Yerevan, where England (Short, Adams, Speelman, Sadler, Hodgson, Miles) should be seeded third after Russia (Kasparov, Kramnik, Dreev, Svidler) and Hungary (Polgar, Leko, Almasi, Portisch).

England has won the Glorney and Faber cups for West European under-18 teams. Here's a top board queen sacrifice:

M Houska (Eng) v K Roser (Fra)

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 Bg5 c5 4 e3 Be7 5 c3 b6 6 Bd3 cxd4 7 exd4 Ba6 8 Bxa6 Nxa6 9 0-0 0-0 10 Qd3 Nc7 11 Ne5 b5 12 Nd2 Qe8 13 f4 d6 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Ng4 Be7 16 f5 exf5 17 Rxf5 g6 18 Ne4 Qd8 19 Nef6+ Bxf6 20 Nxf6+ Kg7 21 Raf1 a6 22 Qh3 h6 23 R1f3 Qc8 24 Qxh6+ Kxh6 25 Rh3+ Resigns.

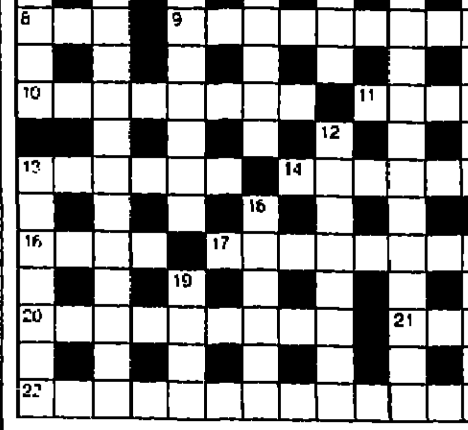
No 2434



White mates in two moves against any defence (by W Barclay). Black's king is stranded, but watch out for near misses.

No 2433: 1 Rg1. If Rxg1 2 d7 Rxg6 3 Qa1. If 1 . . . Rg3 2 Rg2! If Rh2 2 Rc1 and 3 Rc4. Not 1 Rc1? Rxg6.

Quick crossword no. 327



Across

1 Nickname of Florida (8,5)
8 Sailor (3)
9 Skilled craftsman (9)
10 Fail to notice (8)
11 Yield (4)
13 In excess of (6)
14 Confidential (6)
16 Telephone — or visit (4)
17 Dangerous (8)
20 Random (9)
21 Pin (3)
22 Stocking supporter (9,4)

Down

1 Fight (3-2) — begin working (3,2)
2 Areas for novice skiers (7,6)
3 Promontory (8)
4 Idea (6)
5 Secure — place for valuables (4)
6 Parisian landmark (3,2,8)
7 Fervent — could be of importance (7)
12 Baffle (8)
13 God of wine and pleasure (7)
15 Look at — and respect (6)
18 Vision — or eyesore (5)
19 Come to — a party (4)

Last week's solution

R	E	F	U	S	E		E	M	B	A	L	M
A		O		T				A		T		O
V	E	R	G	E		W	I	N	G	T	I	P
I		E		A		A		I		I		P
S	C	A	R	L	E	T		L	U	C	R	E
H		R				E		L				T
		M	I	S	C	R	E	A	N	T		
B				U		M				U		R
T	R	A	M	P		A	F	F	A	B	L	E
U		L		P		R		I		U		C
B	U	L	L	O	C	K		S	O	L	V	E
E		O		R				H		A		S
S	O	W	E	T	O		C	Y	P	R	U	S

Bridge Zia Mahmood

IF YOU are one of those people who cries at tragic dramas, go and fetch a box of tissues before you read on. The story I am about to tell is one of the most heart-rending ever to happen at the bridge table.

First, a bidding problem. Take the West cards below:

♠63 ♥AKQJ1086 ♦4 ♣862

You are playing for serious, but not ruinous stakes. Both sides are vulnerable. South, your right-hand opponent, opens with a strong NT showing 15-17 points. What call do you make?

There are a number of possibilities, and your answer will owe something to personality. The conservative will try two hearts, the more daring will bid three hearts, and the eternal optimist will jump to four hearts. But there is another course of action. What about a penalty double?

Chances are that your left-hand opponent is looking at a few high cards, and is confident that his side can make 1NT. He might even be confident enough to redouble! You have seven tricks in your own hand, and if your partner can produce no more than a solitary ace, the opponents will concede a 1,000 penalty in 1NT redoubled, despite their combined 26 points. An attractive prospect — and if it does not turn out as you hope, you can always bid your heart suit at a later stage.

Whatever you have chosen to bid, I bet that you haven't selected the call that was actually made. The West player who held these cards was of a highly creative nature — can you guess what he bid?

If you guessed two diamonds, then, like the actual West, you have plenty of imagination. This is what happened (see table).

North-South fell headlong into the trap that West had set for them. His psychic diamond overcall persuaded North-South that they had nothing to fear in a no trump game, but in practice they were booked for a penalty of 1,600. Why then, you may wonder, is this a tale of such sorrow? Surely West's action was the stuff of which epics, not tragedies, are made?

In the excitement, East had lost track of the auction. Believing that North had bid no trumps

North
♠A 10 7
♥4 3
♦K J 10 2
♣K Q 6 4

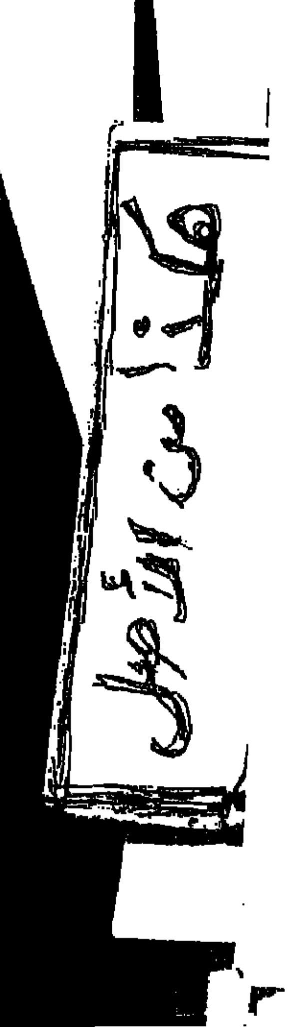
West
♠6 3
♥A K Q J 10 8 6
♦4
♣8 6 2

East
♠Q 9 8 5 4
♥2
♦9 8 7 5
♣10 9 3

South
♠K J 2
♥9 7 5
♦A Q 6 3
♣A J 5

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♦	3NT	No
No	Dble	Redble	No
No	No		

first, and that it was therefore his lead, he quickly detached a small diamond from his hand and, before the horrified West could stop him, had placed it face up on the table! Of course, South exercised his option to compel a diamond lead from West, and the contract was made with an overtrick for a score of 1,400 with the rubber bonus to North-South. Even the Sphinx would have shed a tear for West.



Golf US PGA Championship

Brooks springs a major surprise

David Davies in Louisville

MARK BROOKS beat the finest field ever assembled when he won the 78th US PGA championship at the Valhalla Golf Club here on Sunday. He beat Kenny Perry, a native Kentuckian, in a sudden-death play-off conducted over the 18th hole when Perry traced a sad trail up the left-hand rough and did not even finish the hole.

Brooks, by contrast, found the green in two, hit a putt of all of 70 feet to five feet and holed that for the championship and $430,000. It was his first major and his third tournament victory of the season. It was also easily his best performance in a major, beating the third place he achieved in the Open Championship of 1995. It was his sixth play-off and he now has a 4-2 winning record in them. He also goes over the $1 million mark this season with $1,290,576 (about £869,000).

The last nine holes and been a dogfight between Perry, Brooks Vijay Singh and the defending champion Steve Elkington. The lead changed hands constantly as the four men oscillated between nine and 12 under, although it was Perry who was setting the pace, given that he was out three groups in front of the others. This was as a result of Saturday's 71, a birthday score — he was 36 — during which, he said, he felt exceedingly nervous.

On Sunday he had birdied the 13th with a 15-footer downhill that just reached the hole with its last roll and then birdied the short 14th with a 20-footer to get to 12 under. That was almost as good as an eagle, for the pin at this hole was set at the front of the green, almost impossible to get at from the tee, and bogeys were common.

Perry looked like letting nerves get the better of him at the 15th, where his second shot disappeared into trees and came to rest among the roots of a tree. "I was very fortunate there," said Perry of his recovery shot. "The ball was resting on bare dirt." He not only got it on the green; he got it to four feet and secured his par.

Eventually he came to the 18th still 12 under, needing a birdie to make matters safe. He bogeyed instead, hitting his drive into the rough, his second into more rough and his third just left of the green. A chip and two putts gave the rest of the field a chance. The only man to take it was Brooks. Elkington and Singh both needed birdies at the 18th but Singh drove into a bunker on the way to a bogey and Elkington buried his ball in a greenside bunker on the way to a par.

Brooks, who had been 12 under as early as the 8th, slumped to nine under after 14 but birdied the 15th and then hit a huge drive up the 18th. Like Elkington he found the front bunker with his second but Perry, now commentating on television, said "he's a great bunker player" and so it proved. He came out to five feet, holed the putt firmly and went into the play-off.

It has been a disappointing championship for Nick Faldo. On Sunday he produced a 73, although this, because of the way the course had been set up, was a better effort than either of his two previous rounds. "There were some very tough pin positions out there," he commented afterwards.

"The course beat me. I've got a lot of work to do, unfortunately. After four holes of the second round I was 10 behind and that's a tough place to come back from."

Football FA Charity Shield: Manchester United 4 Newcastle United 0

Champions show Keegan no charity

Up, up and away . . . Manchester United's David Beckham on his way to scoring their third goal at Wembley PHOTOGRAPH: MARK LEECH

David Lacey at Wembley

FOR Manchester United another successful season beckons; for Newcastle United the defence rests. The game on Sunday offered Old Trafford strong reminders of how the championship was regained and St James' Park uncomfortable memories of how it was lost.

More than 45,000 Newcastle supporters thronged Wembley in eager anticipation of seeing Alan Shearer throw down a £15 million gauntlet that would leave Manchester United numbed with self-doubt. Double or no Double.

In the event Newcastle were, for the most part, all fingers and thumbs. Alex Ferguson's team won the most passionate Charity Shield match in living memory by the second-biggest margin since the occasion moved to the stadium, and did so moreover without an orthodox centre-forward.

Kevin Keegan offered no excuses for a Newcastle performance that fell way below last season's high standards. "Manchester United's 4-0 win was about right," he confessed. "There was an enormous gulf between the two sides today."

While Shearer, closely watched by May and poorly supplied with passes and crosses throughout, struggled to make an impact, Manchester United consistently exploited the gaps left by inept Newcastle defending.

Two goals in six minutes left Keegan's side chasing the match. Two more in three minutes towards the end left Newcastle to ponder the uncomfortable truth that it will take more than the vision of the chairman, Sir John Hall, to bring the league title to Tyneside for the first time in 70 years. Only Nottingham Forest, who beat Ipswich 5-0 in 1978, have won the Shield more emphatically at Wembley.

Cantona was quite superb, apart from one incident with Newcastle's Belgian defender, Albert, for which he was lucky to escape with a booking. The Frenchman, who has taken over as Manchester United's captain, orchestrated Newcastle's destruction as Lee, Batty and Beardsley were outmanoeuvred to the point of dizziness by kaleidoscopic patterns of passing and movement.

David Beckham's influence on the match can only have impressed the watching England coach Glenn Hoddle. Beckham, so much more effective when moving inside from the right wing, sent in Cantona to slide the ball past Srnicek after 24 minutes.

On the half-hour he gathered a back-heeled flick from Cantona before centring for Butt to head in the second. Butt later went off with a concussion apparently shared by the opposing defence.

Newcastle established an attacking presence in the second half once Ginola began to roam and Asprilla had replaced a labouring Beardsley. But Schmeichel was seldom troubled and, with two of Ferguson's summer signings, Karel Poborsky and Jordi Cruyff, now augmenting their attack, the champions mopped up.

In the 85th minute Beckham strode on to a Cantona pass and lobbed the advancing Srnicek. Two minutes later Giggs rolled a free-kick square for Keane to score an emphatic fourth.

"We've got to defend as well as score goals," said Shearer, who had failed to hit the target, "and we didn't even do that today."

"Poborsky and Cruyff showed that you don't have to pay exorbitant prices to get brilliant value," said Ferguson a little mischievously.

Nobody mentioned Andy Cole, who now looks a snip at £7 million. Like his old team he had caught pneumonia, except that in Newcastle's case the dose on Sunday was doubled.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Test ends in draw

THE SECOND Test between England and Pakistan drifted to a draw on Monday after heavy rain deprived the Headingley crowd of what might have been a compelling final session of play on the fourth day.

England at that stage had the upper hand after amassing 501 in reply to Pakistan's 448. The highlight of the visitors' innings was 141 runs by Ijaz Ahmed and 105 from Moin Khan — the first centuries by any Pakistanis at Headingley. England hit back with two centuries of their own, a fluent 170 by Alec Stewart and 113 from Nick Knight — his maiden hundred.

Under grey skies, Pakistan openers Saeed Anwar and Shadab Kabir came out to begin their side's second innings proceedings shortly after 5pm on Sunday. The umpires offered them the light, they accepted, and minutes later the heavens opened up. Pakistan were 242 for 7 when the game ended. They lead the series 1-0.

PETER LEVER is to quit his job as England's bowling coach at the end of the season. It follows reports of a rift with team coach David Lloyd, who is believed to have ruffled his former Lancashire teammate's feathers with training techniques that include the playing of patriotic music in the dressing room. Lever refused to comment on the allegations, and Lloyd insisted there was no conflict.




Peter Lever: retiring hurt?

THE man who would be king has finally got his crown. Sachin Tendulkar has been named as India's cricket captain. He takes over from Mohammad Azharuddin, who departs after seven years at the helm. At 23, Tendulkar becomes his country's second-youngest captain after the Nawab of Pataudi, who was 21 when he assumed command in the sixties. Tendulkar, who made his Test debut at 16, will captain India in the four-nation Singer Cup in Sri Lanka later this month.

FORMER Australian Test off-spinner Tim May has announced his retirement. The 34-year-old, who took 75 wickets in 24 Tests, is quitting to concentrate on his business interests.

WITH the English soccer season due to get under way on Saturday, clubs were limbering into shape, buying players and managerial staff in a hectic, last-minute bargain hunt.

Lee Sharpe left Manchester United to join Leeds in a £4 million swoop. The England winger had failed to hold down a regular place in the Double-winning side last season and the arrival of Karel Poborsky and Jordi Cruyff at Old Trafford left him with an uphill task to regain a first-team place. So he opted to move.

Sharpe's arrival followed the departure from the Elland Road club of midfield duo Gary McAllister and Gary Speed to Coventry and Everton respectively.

Wolverhampton Wanderers signed French right-back Serge Romano from FC Martigues on a free transfer, and Coventry completed the signing of 22-year-old Belgian international Reggie Genaux from Standard Liege for £1 million.

Also on the move was goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar. Released by Southampton at the end of last season, the Zimbabwe international signed a 12-month contract with the Second Division newcomers Plymouth Argyle. The club also obtained the services of former Leicester City central defender Tony James from Hereford United, with his fee to be determined by a tribunal.

Former England coach Terry Venables agreed to become Portsmouth's new director of football. He said: "I have had more substantial offers from abroad but at this time I need to be close to London."

Meanwhile in a shock move Arsenal dismissed Bruce Rioch from the post of team manager. The club said they had found a successor but declined to name him.

BRITISH police say they are winning the fight against football hooliganism. Figures from the Football Unit of the National Criminal Intelligence Service show a decline in soccer-related arrests for the fourth year running. Arrests during the 1995-96 season both inside and outside grounds totalled 3,437 — 10 per cent down on the previous season. Euro 96, despite dire warnings, turned out to be a remarkably trouble-free tournament.

ENGLAND are running out of time in their bid to be reinstated in the Five Nations Championships. The Rugby Football Union's attempt to reach a compromise in the row over their £89 million solo television deal has been rejected for a second time.

The competition's other four nations, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France, say they will begin organising their own schedule by the end of this month. But Tom Kiernan, chairman of the Five Nations Committee, said he still hoped agreement could be reached with England.

SIRIMONGKOL Singhmanassuk of Thailand won the World Boxing Council's bantamweight title — vacated by Ireland's Wayne McCullough — when he stopped Mexican Jose Luis Bueno in the fifth round of the bout in the northern Thai city of Phitsanuloke.